

Fabulous Mogul

By the Same Author

JEHRU : THE LOTUS-EATER FROM KASHMIR

BETRAYAL IN INDIA

I'VE SHED MY TEARS

I GO WEST

CHUNGKING DIARY

WITH THE 14TH ARMY

OH ! YOU ENGLISH

THE PULSE OF OXFORD

WE NEVER DIE

JUST FLESH

THERE LAY THE CITY

Fabulous Mogul

NIZAM VII OF HYDERABAD

D. F. Karaka



Derek Verschoyle

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TO
SOONA ERANEE
who saw the way ahead

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D. F. K.

CHAPTER ONE

The Seventh Loaf

THIS is the story of a way of life based on traditions which outsiders may find difficult to understand. It is a tale of grandeur beyond reality, akin to an oriental fable. Yet it is a human document even though the surroundings are feudal and the main character, by prevailing standards of democracy, a despot.

It is the story of a man, counted among the richest in the world, who in his advancing years has abjured his wealth and preferred the simpler joys of life.

Of his wealth he gave freely to those who needed it, millions of rupees to charity. Yet some people persist in the belief that he is a miser.

His ancestors had stood by the British for nearly a century, as far back as the days of the Indian Mutiny. He was a friend of the British, their 'Faithful Ally'.

He gave generously when they asked for help, gifting away £2,000,000 in the first world war, thrice as much in the second.

Yet, in his hour of need they had little to offer him but advice. When he was losing what was virtually a kingdom, a mere Press Attaché was all Lord Mountbatten could spare to send to him.

He never complained.

Bred in the purple, tracing his ancestry back to the first Caliph of Islam on one side and on the other to the Prophet Mahomed himself, he has stood far above the lesser men who have betrayed him.

FABULOUS MOGUL

Like his ancestors, he has always been humble in victory, dignified in defeat.

He is a man of God. He goes each Friday to the mosque for prayer and each evening to the *azakhanna*,¹ built in memory of his mother, to pray.

His God he has never forsaken. That is his strength — his greatest richness.

Rulers in India have been many but among them he has stood out. He is unique.

He is the Seventh Nizam of Hyderabad.

* * * * *

This Nizam of Hyderabad is a Moslem of Turkoman descent. He is rated as a Mogul because of the early association of Asaf Jah, the first Nizam who founded the dynasty, with the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb. Asaf Jah was Aurangzeb's Viceroy in the Deccan. By modern standards, he would be regarded as a naturalized Mogul. His descendants for 300 years have all been brought up in the Mogul way of life.

The State of Hyderabad was, until the British left India in the premier princely state in India. In area it measures 82,700 square miles, over two and a half times the size of Ireland. It forms a polygonal tract occupying almost the whole of the centre of the Deccan plateau. It is often referred to as the underbelly of India. It clearly divides the north from the south and, because of its geographical formation, it can almost be carved out of the sub-continent and put back into it with equal ease, like a piece in a jig-saw puzzle.

In the chequered history of India, while Delhi has been the symbol of power, it was always the Deccan which was the glittering prize.

1. Place where, during the month of Moslem mourning, effigies of religious significance are kept.

THE SEVENTH LOAF

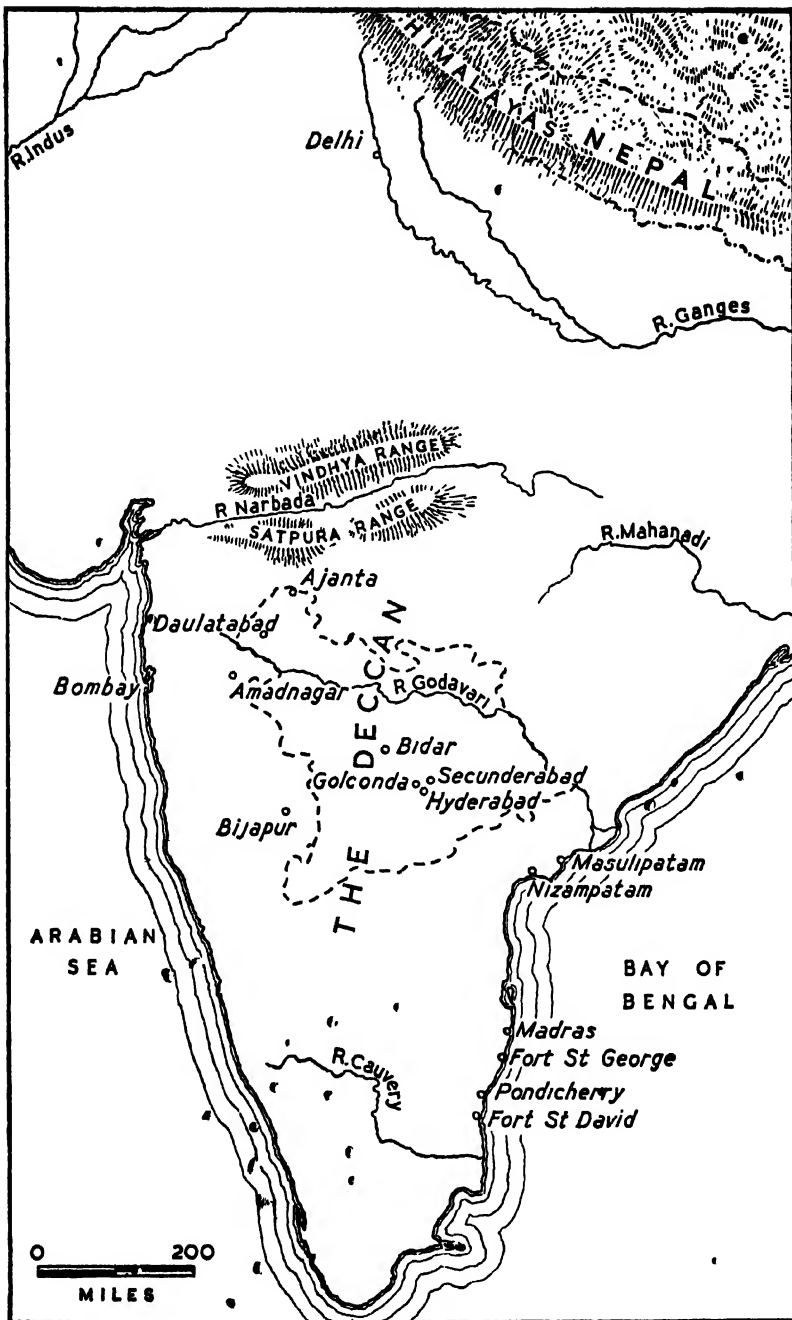
The Deccan, rich in booty, was the attraction for all the early invaders from the north and the north-east. To it first came the nine unholy Nandas, who were ancient Aryan rulers. Then came the Maurya conqueror Bindusara, who had a passion for fruit and learning and who wrote to Antiochus I, the Greek ruler of the Kabul Valley, to send him a parcel of figs and a professor. Next came Asoka, perhaps the most civilized and the greatest of the conquerors, whose famous column with the lions of Sarnath carved on it was adopted centuries later by Gandhi and Nehru as the emblem of free India. Asoka taught India its first lesson in non-violence. On 'fifty-six specified days in the year killing under any pretext was categorically forbidden'.¹ Breach of this order, even to the extent of preparing a chicken broth, made the offender liable to capital punishment.

So they came to the Deccan one by one; first the Nandas, then the Mauryas, then centuries of confusion all belonging to the era of Hindu domination over India.

Next came the Moslem Sultans. Of these it was Ala-ud-Din, the second of the Khiljis, who first cast an acquisitive eye on the Deccan. From his first raid he brought back bags of pearls, precious stones, hundreds of elephants, thousands of horses and a Hindu mistress, as part of his booty. He then elevated his trusted slave Malik Kafur to the rank of general, and sent him on three 'expeditions' to the Deccan. These expeditions were not strictly military. At the top of the Order of Battle which he received from his Sultan, Malik Kafur found the directive: 'Find my mistress's daughter.'

The girl was found. She was wandering like an existentialist amidst the exotic carvings of the Ellora caves when the soldiers of Malik Kafur picked her up. Quickly she was despatched to

1. Vincent A. Smith, *The Early History of India*.



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the Sultan while Malik Kafur stayed behind to pick up his haul of booty, which included 2,750 lb of gold, chests of jewels, 312 elephants, 20,000 horses and a camel.¹ History records that the defeated Hindu ruler, Ballala III, was stripped of everything except his sacred thread.²

Time washed the Khiljis out of the pages of Indian history and a new Moslem family, the Tughlaks, held sway over the capital. Mohammed-bin-Tughlak, the second of the dynasty, was so fascinated by the Deccan that he shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, a distance of some six hundred miles, and when he had plundered it sufficiently moved the capital back to Delhi.

In 1351 Tughlak died — in bed, with the country virtually in rebellion. New kingdoms sprang up like mushrooms over the Deccan, which became again an open hunting ground for the enterprising while it still remained the most glittering prize on the Indian sub-continent.

* * * * *

A hundred and seventy-five years later, the Moguls came to India through Afghanistan. They were descendants of the Mongols of China, though tremendously improved.

Piercing eyes, wrinkled cheeks, flat noses, extended nostrils, wide mouths, long moustaches, and scanty beards — this is how the poet Amir Khusrau describes them. They were strong men, clumsy walkers but expert riders.

The Mongols, whose early home was in the trackless plains of Mongolia, came constantly into contact with strong sturdy

1. *Cambridge History of India*; Vol. I, p. 117.

2. Sathianathaier; *A College Text Book of Indian History*; Vol. II, p. 38.

ances in many ways superior to them. With these they inter-married. The product of that inter-breeding became known as the Mogul.

There were altogether six Mogul Emperors in India who belonged to the Mogul Empire proper. Of them the first three – Babar, Humayun and Akbar – were warriors; the fourth, Jehangir, was a romantic lover; the fifth, Shah Jahan, an artist; and Aurangzeb, the sixth and last, a fanatic.

Aurangzeb was a slim tall figure of a man with a flowing beard, venerable to look at but vicious to deal with.

The sword¹ he carried was typical of the man. It had a simplicity which was frightening. It was thin with just a shade of a curve, suggesting his slight crookedness; it had no ornate handle but one of plain gold, finished in the pattern of a Mahratta hat as if it were intended to be a constant provocation to chop off the Mahratta² heads he so hated. The scabbard was covered in deep purple velvet with a little gold braid thereon, symbol of majesty, authority and power.

Aurangzeb's dagger with a simple, jade handle was even more like him. It had vengeance written all over it. Unquestionably too it had been used, and by the Emperor himself. If the bloodstains did not appear on it any more, it was only because time had washed them away. The steel of the dagger was tempered and inlaid in it was his mark, which looked a cross between the Ace of Spades and the Ace of Clubs. What it stood for no one seems to know.

It was during Aurangzeb's reign which lasted for forty-nine years that a child was born in the family of the Kazi³ of Bokhara, who had migrated to India to serve the Mogul Em-

1. On view at the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.

2. Hindu warrior race which fought the Moguls.

3. Judge.

peror. The child was the Kazi's grandson. The Emperor named him Mir Kamr-ud-Din. When at the age of six the youngster came to the Court with his father, Aurangzeb awarded him a *mansab*¹ and predicted a great future for the lad. To the father, the Emperor said: 'The star of destiny shines on the forehead of your son'.²

At the age of sixteen, the young Mir Kamr-ud-Din hunted a tiger and was given the title of Bahadur, which meant valiant.

When only nineteen, the Emperor, pleased with his skill as a warrior, bestowed on him the title of Chin Fateh Khan.

So attached to the young soldier did the Emperor become, that on one occasion when Mir Kamr-ud-Din's horse was killed under him, Aurangzeb replaced it with a grey Arab steed and a saddle embroidered with pearls. He also gave the young man a sword, the handle of which was studded with rubies, the sort of royal favour which would appear at the top of the Court Circular of the day. Simultaneously, Mir Kamr-ud-Din was appointed Commander of 5,000 horse.

There was little wonder in Court circles when, at the young age of twenty-six, Mir Kamr-ud-Din became Aurangzeb's Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy, first of Bijapur and later of the Deccan.

Aurangzeb died in 1707. There followed a period of unrest with various claimants playing musical chairs around the old Mogul throne. The feeble, short-lived, Farrukshyār, during his brief tenure as Emperor, conferred on Mir Kamr-ud-Din the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk Fateh Jung.

Nizam meant regulator.

Mulk meant country.

Fateh was the word for victorious and *Jung* meant battle.

1. Hereditary monthly gift of money.

2. *Hadqulat-ul-Alam*, Vol III, p. 49.

Together it stood for: Regulator of the Country, Victorious in Battle.

Mir Kamr-ud-Din thus became the first Nizam.

A subsequent emperor, Muhammad Shah, bestowed on him the title of Asaf Jah. Asaf was King Solomon's minister and the title Asaf Jah meant 'Equal to Asaf'. The dynasty of the Nizams of Hyderabad is therefore known as the Asaf Jah dynasty.

Mir Kamr-ud-Din is referred to more frequently as Asaf Jah I than as the first Nizam, although in reality he was both. Subsequently in the dynasty, the title of wisdom gave place to the title of authority and power. Asaf Jah's successors came to be known as Nizams of Hyderabad.

Asaf Jah's sword¹ was straight like the man who carried it. It was simple like Aurangzeb's with much the same kind of gold handle. But instead of deep purple which covered the Emperor's, Asaf Jah's was covered in gold-yellow velvet. This gold-yellow became the house colour of the Asaf Jah dynasty.

Aurangzeb's was the sword of vengeance; Asaf Jah's the sword of justice. It symbolized the even-tempered, balanced, generous man at whose side it hung. With it he conquered, as was essential in those days, but he also spared the vanquished with the generosity of a gallant victor.

On his death bed, Asaf Jah the first Nizam, dictated a seventeen-clause last will and testament, which is still preserved in the Records Office of Hyderabad State. In it he laid down certain principles which he wished his successors to follow.

Asaf Jah spoke of maintaining the dignity and prestige of Islam and of defending the Deccan 'from armies of freebooters'. The reference was to the Mahrattas, the warlike race of the Hindus. He expressed his concern for human life. 'Mankind

1. Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.



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should not be likened to so many ears of barley, wheat and maize, which grow anew every year.'

He stressed the need for travel but, he cautioned: 'You should grant sepoy and camp-followers leave according to their days of service and post as many of them as is advisable and necessary, in such a way that it may not cut short the propagation of their species, and thus make you guilty before God.'

He believed in the Divine Right of Kings and consequently had no use for socialist ideology.

He believed in peace talks, though not in appeasement. 'As far as possible', he said, 'it is better not to take upon yourself the initiative in war whether fought for the sake of conquest or of wealth. As far as in you lies, you must try to avoid disputes and enmities, and settle them as they arise, so as to improve matters. But if you find this futile and the other party inimical and arrogantly defiant, then there is no other way left. You should beseech God for His assistance, and taking the field against the enemy, compel him to obedience.'

He considered the people of Kashmir a bad lot. 'It is necessary to avoid them and not believe in what they say in season or out of season.'

He laid down a cautious budget policy. 'If you follow in my footsteps', he said, 'the present expenditure remaining the same, my resources of income will suffice for the next seven generations.'

He spoke of the advisability of having a mobile treasury, an idea adopted by Nizam VII during the recent invasion of Hyderabad.

He apologized for marriage and his wife. He said: 'Although in my old age, it was better that no such thing happened and that I had not taken unto myself a wife, yet through human

frailty, incidentally this did happen and since it is a question of my honour, I enjoin upon my children and their descendents, above all, to have regard for her and help her and support her without fail.'

In his opinion the Brahmins of the Deccan, although able, 'were fit only to be hanged and quartered'.

He had no use for gossip. Firmly he warned: 'You must not lend your ears to tittle-tattle of the back-biters and slanderers, nor suffer the riff-raff to approach your presence.'

He concluded his will by saying: 'Seventeenthly, arise now and go quickly; appoint your own men to look after the State concerns, and establish them there. We leave you in the protection of God; He is your support and may He grant you guidance and light.'

The seventeen-clause will was concentrated commonsense in an emergency pack.

The seven generations, which Asaf Jah mentions in his last testament had a significance for him. The story goes that once, on the road from Delhi, somewhere between Burhanpur and Khuldabad, Asaf Jah, then a young man, paused on the way-side at the abode of an ancient holy man who offered him food.

It was a frugal meal of bread and water, which was all the holy man could provide. The bread was a small, round flat loaf dented in the middle, called a *khulcha*.

Asaf Jah was hungry. He ate three or four of the loaves and feeling embarrassed that he was depriving the holy man of his bread he apologized for his hunger.

'There is plenty more in the house, my son', the holy man said to him. 'Eat as much as you can. It is all for you.'

Asaf Jah had a fifth loaf and then a sixth. He looked at the holy man who quietly nodded and said: 'Eat, son.' Asaf Jah ate one more, the seventh. Then he was full.

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'I have had enough,' Asaf Jah said, putting his hand on his chest and bowing his head to show gratitude.

Again the holy man urged him, but Asaf Jah could eat no more.

The meal was over and the holy man turned to him and said: 'Go now, my son, may the blessings of Allah be on you. Your dynasty will rule for seven generations.'

The *khulcha* became the emblem of the Asaf Jah dynasty. It still appears on the personal flag of the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad.

* * * * *

The population of Hyderabad State, over which the Nizam ruled until recently, is estimated at 16,000,000. It is predominantly Hindu. In fact the complexity of the situation which faced the Government of India after the partition of which divided Hindu India from Moslem Pakistan, arose from the fact that there still remained in the centre of India a vast area and a vast Hindu population over whose destiny presided a Moslem ruler.

Hyderabad State is the archaeologists' paradise. Where the plateau of the Deccan begins there still stand the living rocks of Ajanta and the caves of Ellora with their exquisite carvings which rate among the lasting treasures of the world. Surrounding these historic landmarks, to which tourists and art-lovers from all over the world make pilgrimages, are innumerable Hindu temples, Moslem mosques and Buddhist monasteries, ornate with carvings, paintings and statues, which stand as permanent testimony to the civilization and culture to which they belong.

The capital city of Hyderabad State, where the Nizam lives, is also called Hyderabad. It is a queer mixture of old and new.

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There are mosques and minarets only a few hundred yards away from modern shops selling streamlined limousines and plastic toys. There are red-fezzed Moslems riding bicycles not far from bearded priests bowed in prayer. There are modern Indian women shopping, their faces smoothed by the lotions of Elizabeth Arden, while other women still in *boorkhas*¹ shuffle along the same shopping centre.

Sometimes there is an inexplicable delay in buying a postage stamp, whereas from the palace of the Nizam an urgent personal call can be quickly put through to a Constitutional Adviser in London or a perfumier in Paris.

The architecture of this city is very mixed. On the same road one finds a squat oriental bungalow, so like a villa in Spanish Morocco, and next to it a flashy, modern cement-faced four-storied building emitting from its windows a sickening hue of bluish-green neon lighting. And then, only a few miles away stands the relic of an old rock-fortress which goes as far back as the twelfth century.

Midst this conglomeration of civilizations lives the fabulous Mogul — Osman Ali Khan, Nizam VII.

1. A tent-like garment which orthodox Moslem women wear when leaving their homes so that their faces and figures cannot be seen.

CHAPTER TWO

The Clever British

THE Moguls, though religious, were not exactly a sentimental tribe. As the turf was smoothed over Asaf Jah's grave and the last prayers uttered, there arose five claimants to the throne, all near and dear relatives of the late Viceroy of the Deccan.

'Each unto Himself and God for All' was the motto of these men whose rough edges education and culture had not yet evened out. Of the five claimants, four were Asaf Jah's sons: Ghazi-ud-Din, Nasir Jung, Salabat Jung and Nizam Ali. The fifth was his grandson, Muzzafar Jung.

On this chessboard of power politics came two outside forces, the French and the British. They had been vying with each other even during Asaf Jah's lifetime to gain favour at the Nizam's Court. No durable or advantageous trade could be built up by them without the support of the Nizam. The brushes between the French and the English over the question of establishing contacts with India had its echo in Europe where France and Great Britain were becoming involved in the war of the Austrian succession.

The British Council of Fort St George, therefore, decided in March 1742 to send presents to the Nizam, Asaf Jah, of the value of 13,000 pagodas which was the currency at that time.

A list of presents was prepared. It included golden flowered silks from Nanking, gold and silver silks from Europe, velvets, brocades, Persian carpets, a gold musund,¹ filigree plate,

1. Old English way of spelling *masnad* a cloth spread out to be sat upon on ceremonial occasions, e.g. marriages, etc.

ottardans, collumdans, pandans, an equipage for coffee cups, a rose-water bottle in the shape of a bird, half a dozen ornate rose-water bottles in other shapes, chinaware, Japan dishes, plates and butter pots, large gold dishes, large gold bowls, embossed cloth, yards of broad cloth, $9\frac{1}{4}$ maunds of almonds, kishmish,¹ $39\frac{3}{4}$ chests of rose-water, a silver-mounted gun, a pair of pistols, a silver-mounted fowling piece, a silver-mounted long gun, eight crimson velvet cushions, two young Arab horses, five dozen bottles of white aniseed water, fifteen dozen bottles of orange water, empty bottles, corks, etc.

The Nizam showed his appreciation by sending to the Governor of Fort St George a horse and a *sarpich*.² But he made it quite clear to the authorities of Fort St George that he strongly objected to the privilege which the English claimed for themselves of coining their own money. The English decided not to offend him and therefore coined money surreptitiously.

By now there were changes in the personnel of the Fort office. The new English Governor whose name was Morse – though it could have been Blimp – acknowledged the Nizam's gift thus:

To Nabob Nizam-ul-Mulk Aussif Jawh,

I have had the honour to receive your Excellency's most gracious Perwana³ with a present of Seerpaw.⁴ This I esteem a singular mark of Your favour; which to me is the greatest happiness I can meet with in this world. I humbly return my most sincere and unfeigned thanks to Your Excellency for the same, and offer my prayers to God to grant Your Excellency a continual state of health and prosperity, prolong your life and increase your riches

1. Currants.

2. Jewellery worn or tied round headgear.

3. Communication.

4. English way of spelling *sarpich*.

THE CLEVER BRITISH

to the great satisfaction of the whole Empire. As to what Your Excellency has been pleased to send away the goods belonging to the Surcar¹ by sea to Surat: I shall take great care to assist your people when ships go thither, till which time I beg Your Excellency will please to order and appoint some person to take care of the goods, and that he may also be answerable afterwards for the number, measure or weight of the said goods and that he may likewise be accountable for any risque that may accidentally happen to them. I have fully wrote to Ghulam Hussain Cawn² about this affair who will communicate it to you. May Your Excellency be always victorious over your enemies.³

This exchange of courtesies proved most useful to the British. It made it easier for Commodore Griffin, Commander of the English naval forces and Governor of Fort St David to address a letter to the Nizam on 6th March 1747, complaining of 'all the robberies, cruelties, and depredations committed on shore upon the King my Master's subjects, by that insolent, perfidious nation the French'.⁴

The Nizam reacted immediately. He sent a mandate to the Nabob of Arcot, one of his provincial governors, to restore the English to their rights. The Nizam said: 'The English nation from ancient times, are very obedient, and serviceable: besides which they always proved to be a set of true people, and it is very hard that they met with these troubles, misfortunes, and destruction. I do therefore write you, to protect, aid, and assist them in all respects, and use your best endeavours in such a manner, that the French may be severely chastised and rooted off, that His Majesty's seaport town may be restored to their

1. Sirkar.

2. Khan.

3. *Diary and Consultation Book*, 1743.

4. Mill, *History of India*, Vol III, p. 73.

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right, establish themselves in their former place, as before, and carry on their trade and commerce for the nourishment of the place.'¹

Nasir Jūng, the Nizam's son, meanwhile wrote a letter to Monsieur Dupleix, the French Governor of Pondicherry.

It read:

The English Nation and you were come into the country of our king for to Trade and commerce in these Parts, and I wonder that you should Betray and take Madrass, a Settlement [that] has been enjoyed Peacedly by the English from Ancient times, and also deprive and plunder St Thome actually belonging to the Circar. If there was a war in Europe between the English and French you should engage them at Sea, but on the contrary without considering what will be done to you in future destroyed the said Settlements in the King's Country. I have now sent a party of my troops about it and upon the receipt of this Perwanah² and Dustock³ I would have you directly and immediately deliver Fort St George to the English with all the Goods and whatever you took possession of with all the English people to your custody, and take receipt of them and sent it up to me by the Suzaval.⁴ Take care of it and do not commit any such disturbances or be Guilty of the like in future. On the contrary you shall meet with no good Merits but shall be fallen under a Severe Punishment. Observe it as a strict order and comply punctually according to this Perwanah.

On Asaf Jah's death, the first move to claim the throne was made by Nasir Jung. He seized the family jewels and, in consultation with the Army, proclaimed himself Subedar or Viceroy of the Deccan.

1. Ibid, p. 74.

2. Communication.

3. Meaning not ascertainable.

4. Courier.

THE CLEVER BRITISH

The French who were near-by in the south, smarting under Nasir Jung's *perwana* to Monsieur Dupleix, raised an early cry for *la justice*. They lent their support to Asaf Jah's grandson Muzzafar Jung who was then a provincial Governor. The basis of his claim was a will which it was alleged his grandfather had executed in his favour. The French did not translate their support of Muzzafar Jung into military action and Nasir Jung was able to take his nephew prisoner.

Before Nasir Jung could consolidate his position he was murdered. The French moved in on the band waggon and Muzzafar Jung was once again put into power.

There were now four living claimants to the throne. The ascendancy of Muzzafar Jung with the help of the French was by no means the final word on this subject. The British, near at hand, did not relish the fact that the French had ousted them at the Nizam's Court.

Salabat Jung, Asaf Jah's third son, was the most suitable candidate from the British point of view. The British sportingly offered him help, an offer which the contender to the throne was happy to accept.

Neither Muzzafar Jung nor Salabat Jung, however, was destined to become Nizam. The first was killed and the second deposed by his younger brother, Nizam Ali, and subjected to the Mogul routine: prison and heart-failure.

Nizam Ali thus became Nizam II and ruled till 1803. The British quickly recognized his ascendancy to the throne. They even promised to pay the new Nizam an annual tribute of £40,000 for a handful of districts transferred to them. They also bound themselves 'to have a body of their troops ready to settle the affairs of His Highness's government in everything that is right and proper'. Thus gradually the British moved into favour with the Nizam and the French moved out.

FABULOUS MOGUL

The test of those alliances with the British was the occasion of the clash between the Nizam and the Mahrattas which occurred a few years later. The Mahrattas had become obstreperous and the Nizam called on the British under the agreement to help quell this disturbance within his domain. The British did not think the occasion was 'right and proper'. Their contention was that the Mahrattas were allies of the English Company with whom it was essential they remain on friendly terms. Any move towards quelling the disturbances might possibly endanger the peace of their own settlement and possessions, and peace was still their prime concern.

As a result the Nizam paid heavily in humiliation and territorial losses. The fort of Daulatabad had to be yielded to the Mahrattas; with it went a promise of a cash payment of over £2,000,000. The Nizam even had to leave his Prime Minister as hostage with the Mahrattas.

It was Lord Mornington, Britain's representative in India, who succeeded in ironing out the furrows from the Nizam's brow. His tail-coated appearance in the presence of the Nizam soon produced yet another arrangement between the Nizam and the British.

It was novel, compared with that which existed before.

Hitherto Britain paid for the privileges it received from the Nizam. Under the new arrangement they received £200,000 from him. In return they undertook to raise a subsidiary force to protect him.

Lord Mornington was immediately made Marquis of Wellesley.

* * * * *

In contrast to the frail, slim figure of Asaf Jah I, his son, who became Nizam II, was a robust figure of a man. On his power-

ful neck sat a classic Mogul head, with an angular nose. He had a determined chin and his lips were sensuous. A heavy, trim moustache accentuated his masculinity. Yet his hands had exquisitely shaped fingers, so unsuited to the fighting man which he was. He ruled from 1761 to 1803.

Nizam III, whose name was Sikander Jah, was a weaker, plumper man. It was during his reign which lasted twenty-six years that the districts known as the Berars or Berar, in the north-western corner of the Nizam's Dominions, first attained a measure of importance. Berar was some 16,000 square miles in area. It had come into the possession of the Moguls when it was ceded to Akbar. When Asaf Jah became Viceroy of the Deccan it came within his sphere of administration. When he set up his own kingdom he acquired it as part of his heritage.

In the history of the Nizams of Hyderabad, Berar appears to have had high pawnable value. The Mahrattas had occupied it in order to ensure their collection of indemnity from the Nizam. In 1819, when the Mahratta Empire was liquidated, Nizam III retrieved it.

When the British decided that a force was necessary for the defence of the Nizam, the administration of Berar had to be handed over to them to ensure regular payments for the upkeep of this contingent.

The British were clever, for Berar yielded a total revenue of Rs 5,000,000¹ per year. It also yielded large crops of cotton, so essential to the mills of Lancashire, on the output of which Britain was now building her export trade.

Nizam III was succeeded by his son Nasir-ud-Daulah who became Nizam IV. The new Nizam had the temerity to protest against the British claim over Berar. He maintained that the

1. £350,000

Excise revenue which the British levied on liquor in the cantonments and the adjacent villages was really the Nizam's and that this revenue more than paid for the debt the British claimed on the Contingent Account.

The British, now firmly rooted on Indian soil, did not accept this argument. Instead, on 15th May 1853, they induced Nizam IV to execute a treaty by which the district of Berar was transferred to them as a surety for the supposed debt. Berar was in pawn again.

The Nizam was, however, assured that if and when the books of account between him and the British were balanced, Berar would forthwith be returned to him or his descendents.

Nizam died on 16th May 1857 and was succeeded by his son Afzul-ud-Daulah, Nizam V.

Father and son looked remarkably alike. But the pictures in the family album show how gradually, one by one, the Nizams had become more corpulent. With Nizam V one saw the triple chin, the weak mouth, overgrown side whiskers, a chest inflated with ease and good living, and a general appearance of podginess remote from the slim, soldier-like Asaf Jah I, who had founded the dynasty.

By now the British who came to trade with India had established an empire. They had raised an army of mercenaries who broke out into revolt in 1857. The rebellion was spreading from district to district and the British did not know which way to turn.

But the Nizams of Hyderabad never forsook their allies. It was a matter of *iman*¹ with them. Disregarding the loss of Berar, Nizam V despatched his State forces to the aid of Sir Hugh Rose at Sagar. Together they broke through at Madanpur, captured Dalbeit and Jhansi, where the famous Rani of I. Honour.

THE CLEVER BRITISH

Jhansi was whipping the sepoy into a patriotic frenzy. Then, after a decisive action at Coonch, Rose and the Hyderabad State forces finally subdued the leader of the mutineers, Tantia Topee. The mutiny was over.

English-manufactured goods valued at Rs 100,000¹ were hurriedly sent to the Nizam as a gift of gratitude from the British. With it came a note to say that a 'debt' of Rs 5,000,000,² which the British maintained the Nizam still owed them, was cancelled. But Berar still remained in pawn with the British. Generosity is uppermost in the mind of my British ally, the Nizam said, even though their mathematics are a trifle weak.

Nizam V died in 1869 and was succeeded by his son Mahboob Ali Khan, Nizam VI, a minor at the time of his accession.

During his minority, his Regent, taking the British at their word, offered to redeem Berar by raising a loan of £8,000,000 which would be deposited with the British Government so that its interest would adequately provide for the Contingent.

But the British turned down the Regent's offer. It would not be fair, they said, to decide so important an issue while His Highness was still a minor.

1. £7,000.

2. £350,000.

CHAPTER THREE

Diamond Paper-Weight

As the years rolled on, Mahboob Ali Khan grew up from the little boy who had ascended the throne, shepherded by his Regent, to become a venerable Victorian with all the trimmings and trappings of that period.

In the pictures that hang from the walls of the palace he appears in a well-tailored English suit, single-breasted with four buttons spaced widely apart and a narrow lapel; a starched shirt with a stiff turned-down collar and a silk cravat; black shining boots with buttons at the sides; a gold-topped stick and suede gloves.

Mahboob Ali Khan, Nizam VI, was a man fond of all the good things of this world. He believed that money was there to spend. From the chatter of his noblemen he gathered one day that a Parsi merchant in the city was not doing so well and that his little family concern which had been a landmark in Hyderabad might have to fold up. Trade was bad.

A day or so later the Nizam paid an unexpected visit to this good merchant's shop. As his carriage and pair suddenly halted at this snapp, the old Parsi sitting behind his depleted cash counter jumped to his feet. The Nizam had never before stepped into his shop. Reverently the merchant bowed and did his dozen *adabs* which was a salutation of the hand almost from the ground upwards.

The Nizam stood and gazed around the shop. With as quick eye he noticed the dust on many of the articles which had long remained unsold. The price tags had gone yellow.

DIAMOND PAPER-WEIGHT

His silent inspection completed, he informed the merchant within hearing of his attendants that there were many articles in his shop which he would like to buy for his palaces.

The merchant reverently bowed again. To him these words meant salvation.

Then with a lordly gesture the Nizam lifted his stick and with its point described an arc indicating a large portion of the shop. 'Buy this', he commanded his escorts. Then His Highness hurriedly walked out. It was for his attendants to carry out the details of his command.

This happened more than once to worthy men in need. Often, they say, the question was left to be hotly debated between the merchant and the palace officials, exactly from where to where the Nizam's stick had moved, which goods were within the semicircle His Highness had described.

But there would never be any indication that the purpose of the Nizam's visit was to do charity. Charity demeans the other man, Nizam VI used to say.

On another occasion, the head of his household police, known as the Kotwal, whose name was Akbar Jung, reported to the Nizam that one of the palace servants had stolen jewellery worth Rs 100,000¹ from His Highness's bedroom. The incident had occurred in the early hours of the morning. The thief had taken the jewels to his home where he was caught.

The incident was recorded in the Kotwal's daily diary which the Nizam read each day, for it contained a fund of information about all manner of things.

The Nizam commended the Kotwal on his alertness and commanded that the erring servant and the jewels be produced before him. This was immediately done. The Nizam looked over the jewels very casually. Then he turned to his Kotwal

1. £7,000.

and said: 'Unwittingly you have arrested an innocent man. Obviously he did not have the courage to tell you that I had given him the jewels as a gift. The jewels are his.'

While he was generous in charity he was inordinately exacting in discipline and allegiance. His orders, if official, were communicated in the form of a *firman*, something unalterable, like the law of the Medes and Persians, of which Daniel speaks in the Old Testament. If it was an informal order calling upon anyone to see him, the person so commanded to appear in his presence had only to be told: 'Sirkar¹ has remembered you.'

Sometimes he set impossible tasks for his attendants to perform. They often waited for as long as three and four days because, as his whims and fancies moved him, he would give an order and not follow it through. 'Afsur,' His Highness would say to his most trusted nobleman, Nawab Afsur-ul-Mulk, who performed the function of Military Secretary, Private Secretary and Gentleman-in-Waiting, all rolled up in one, 'let us go on shikar'.

His Highness would express it as a wish in a casual sort of way, but in reality it was a command. In an instant the whole machinery of the shikar would be put into motion. The most fertile hunting ground in his dominion would be chosen according to the season and the shoot. The royal saloon would be shunted to No. 1 platform at his private station. Food for the shooting party, which included courtiers and attendants, would be stocked both on the special train and at the camp which would be quickly alerted of His Highness's impending visit. Rifles, cartridges and all accessories, including goats, would be sent ahead. Beaters of the appropriate area would be hurriedly informed. They in turn would inform the tigers, so it seemed,

1. My lord or royal master.

judging from the precision with which the royal shoot was organized.

As the carriages got ready at the palace gate, the Nawab would report to His Highness 'Sirkar, the shoot is ready'. The, Nizam would acknowledge this with a nod.

Then they would wait — the train fully steamed up at the station, the carriage with horses ready in the portico, the retinue with their bags packed and their rifles slung; at the camp a horde of attendants, all dressed up and ready to receive him, the beaters in the jungles watching for his step.

If the spirit moved him, the Nizam would come down at once. If not, that day would pass and the night and another day with all arrangements at key pitch. Only the horses, of which there were six hundred in the royal stables, would be changed from time to time, the men remaining at their posts night and day sleeping as best they could until their Sirkar communicated his desire to leave.

Yet no one dared suspend the arrangements, even at a late hour of the night, when it was obvious to everyone that no move could be made until the morning. An order given by the Nizam could not be countermanded by anyone else.

Any time during the next day or two, and sometimes even three or four, he would, at a moment's notice, give Abid, his valet, the word that he desired to change into his shikar clothes. Like a little pebble thrown into a calm pond, the news would spread, reaching every corner of his palace.

There would be relays of messengers from his dressing room to the palace gates, carrying reports of His Highness's state of readiness for departure. Sirkar is getting ready, Sirkar is washing his hands; Sirkar is putting on his coat . . . Sirkar is ready to leave.

Then everybody would rush to their respective positions and

FABULOUS MOGUL

only after he entered his carriage and communicated to the coachman where he wished to be driven would any movement be made. The fact that a whole shikar had been arranged at a certain spot did not necessarily mean that he would go there. He always had the privilege of changing his mind at the last minute, a privilege which he sometimes exercised. Time, which waits for no man, waited for him.

At Pakhal, on the Bezwada railway line, the hunting ground was his own preserve. The best shooting would be in the hot weather in the months of April and May. This is when the jungle is dry and the animals are confined to one place.

On these shoots no one could relax. In the hottest months he would ask for his special saloon to be shunted to Narsampet station, where the temperature quickly soared. It was his habit to get out of the train around noon to take a walk on the station with an attendant holding an umbrella over his head. While he did this all the courtiers had to stand at attention in the scorching heat, fully dressed in their long coats, and wearing the *dastar*¹, the *baglus*² and belt. News of kills would then arrive and he would give orders to move.

During these shooting trips he would feed the poor in their thousands. Often he would actually go into the kitchens to supervise the food. Sometimes he would stand by and watch these poor peasants eat. He would pour water into the cupped palms of their hands.

The drill would be the same when, on the spur of the moment, he would decide to change his place of abode from one palace to another, sometimes without even indicating to which palace he wished to go. This made it necessary for all his palaces to be kept in readiness to receive him.

1. Headgear of the Hyderabad State.

2. Buckle with his crest on it.

DIAMOND PAPER-WEIGHT

As the Nizam seldom if ever left his domain, he frequently desired a change of residence from one palace to another.

Nizam VI alternated between three palaces — Chow Mahalla, Purani Haveli and Falaknuma. Of the three, he stayed most at Chow Mahalla, the ancestral home of the Asaf Jahs.

Chow Mahalla was so named because, as its name implies, it houses four palaces which form a large quadrangle. In the centre is a pool of still water in which, even today, a few swans can be seen swimming lazily around.

The approach to Chow Mahalla is through narrow winding lanes, as in an Arab city with the high wall of the palace on the one side and the little mud hovels of the people on the other. It was the side entrance which was commonly used. The main entrance with the high front gates closing in a tall Tudor arch was reserved for the Nizam and for use on those rare occasions when the Viceroy of India paid an official visit. The rest of the palace personnel — high personages of State, his official wives, his zenana, his attendants, his servants and his noblemen, they all used the side entrance.

From a break in the high wall of the side entrance, the carriage or car would swing into a short circular driveway which leads to a portico almost mediævally Spanish in appearance, ornate in a crude simple way. After a few steps there comes a wooden door studded with a motif of wrought iron. The door opens on to no vista. Instead, a heavy cream-coloured wall stands a few yards in front. The traditional Moslem did not permit access to his private home directly from the public highway.

Then a long narrow corridor swings left. This corridor, completely unadorned except for two old-fashioned ceiling lanterns, is like a maze in a village fair alternately winding right

or left, seemingly without any purpose at all. But the purpose is there. It is privacy. No more than three can walk abreast along the passage. After its many twists and turns the corridor swings right again and, through a low door, opens on to a corner of the immense courtyard in the middle of the four palaces.

The high wall, the heavily studded door, the narrow winding corridor and the low courtyard door, all of which give a feeling of claustrophobia, were intended to guard well the privacy of the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Chow Mahalla is a mixture of various periods of architecture and interior decoration. Each of the four palaces, which are low and sprawling, have their reception rooms, each with its own colour scheme. One is ruby red and gold, another purple and gold, a third green and gold and the fourth pink and gold. A feature of all these large reception rooms is the number of closely hanging chandeliers, the glass of which matches the colour of the room. On the walls are smaller clusters of lights and in the same colour are heavy curtain drapes of thick silk tapestry, now gradually falling apart. The richness of the material, the brilliance of the colours and the weight of the heavily tasselled cords indicate that no expense has been spared to furnish the palaces of the Nizam.

The furniture of these rooms varies. But in the main it is old French period furniture, a mixture of Louis with an odd piece of the period of Queen Anne or Queen Victoria. The chandeliers, typically oriental, came from Turkey; a few from Venice. Harmony was farthest away from the mind of the interior decorator who was, in this case, Nizam VI. If an article or a bibelot were beautiful in itself, it found a place in one of the reception rooms where it stood out of period, yet not out of place in the overall richness of its setting.

DIAMOND PAPER-WEIGHT

The reception rooms each had a gallery overlooking it with a painted wrought-iron railing in a matching colour. Behind this railing still hangs thin net gauze of fuchsia pink, like the veil of Marie Antoinette hanging behind the Bastille bars. Its purpose however, was to screen the women of the zenana who would sit behind it, overlooking the reception scene on high occasions of State.

* * * * *

It was a summer afternoon, scorching hot. To Chow Mahalla there came a Levantine Jew whose name was Jacob.

In that year, 1898, time had little meaning in the life of an Indian prince. The day was measured by the morning in which the sleepy palace gradually came to life, the afternoon in which it rested again and the evening which drifted into the night.

A hansom drawn by a chestnut Arab horse brought Jacob to the palace gate. There the guards stopped him. Jacob alighted from the cab, wearing a white suit of superior shiny duck. Under it was a silk shirt. A pearl tie-pin rested uncomfortably on a coloured silk cravat, gaudy but expensive.

Jacob was on a special mission to the palace that day. He was sweating, partly because of the heat but partly also because of the excitement of meeting one of the richest men in the world.

An appointment had been fixed for Jacob by the viceroy, Abid.¹ Abid held a privileged position in the royal household. By reason of his job he was closest to the old Nizam. He had the ear of His Highness and knew his royal master in all his off-the-record moods and moments. Abid could be likened to a Gentleman-of-the-Bedchamber. He was in fact the only one.

Abid had easier access to His Highness than even the Diwan.² The latter could only see the Nizam on business of State. Abid

1. Also a Jew. 2. Chief Minister.

FABULOUS GEM

was indispensable. Every time His Highness unfastened a button or changed a garment, Abid was there. He had to be there. HH could not do without him.

It was Abid who first spoke to the Nizam about Jacob and his precious gem. It had come by chance into Jacob's hands, who would not ordinarily part with it.

The Nizam of Hyderabad was naturally curious to see this diamond of which Abid spoke. He would at least want to compare it with the other priceless jewels in his own collection, part of which, by the most conservative standards, was rated as fabulous.

So the meeting was fixed for one afternoon the next week. Jacob had come in response to that call.

The guards knew of Jacob's arrival, for, as was the custom, word had to be sent to the main gate before any visitor was allowed through it. His Highness would see him that afternoon, when he awakened from his mid-day siesta.

Jacob was escorted by a guard through the sprawling palace grounds. Past the squat buildings that had grown up haphazard through the years he walked, mopping his brow. No one knew what his business was except Abid who had brought him there. The curious eyes which peeped through slits of still curtains wondered who Jacob was. He was a newcomer to the palace. Perhaps he was a messenger from a foreign potentate; perhaps he was a banker negotiating a loan. But no one guessed the real purpose of his visit, which was to sell one of the largest diamonds in the world to the only man who could buy it from him.

So he came to the inner courtyard of the palace where the Nizam VI lived. He mounted the seventeen steps that led to the long verandah and walked through the archway, which rested on long columns, to the main audience room. There he waited

DIAMOND PAPER-WRIGHT

Below his feet was an old Persian rug, woven as finely as *petit-point* embroidery. Around him, as he cast his eyes about, he could see a mixed assortment of furniture which had come from all parts of the world. It looked Victorian. The hall was large.

The escort left Jacob there, awaiting His Highness's pleasure. From another room a palace servant pulled the cords of a primitive Indian ceiling *punkah*¹ to keep Jacob cool. There he sat, in solitary splendour, emotionless. He showed no sign of nervousness even though a 182½ carat diamond was nestling in the inside pocket of his coat. Occasionally his hand went, almost instinctively, to it; it was just his habit of making sure the gem was still there.

There was a stillness about that great hall. The Nizam was asleep. Everyone walked on tip-toe, for His Highness's retiring room was just behind the heavy silk curtains.

Then Abid came. He went up to Jacob and greeted him warmly, as Israelites do on the eve of big business. They spoke for a while in low whispers, not out of secrecy but merely to fit in with the pattern of palace life at this hour. Intrigue and petty jealousies had haunted the abodes of the princes of India before enlightenment and education came to their palaces. This had made it incumbent on all who valued their safety of life and position to speak always in whispers so that no one else could hear. The habit had far outlived the necessity.

Then Abid left, for there were signs of His Highness awakening in the room next door. Soon he would give an audience to Jacob. It was the only appointment His Highness had that afternoon. Affairs of State had all been settled earlier in the day.

Nizam VI was at peace with the world. His 'world' was really only the British representative called the Resident. The
1. Fan.

Resident represented the Viceroy of India, who in turn represented the British monarch. With the British the Nizams had treaty rights. He had no doubt in his mind that these rights would be respected so long as the good Queen Victoria ruled in England. Her name stood for progress, steady but sure, which moved from precedent to precedent with the cadence of a flowing Tennysonian stanza.

The wars with the British were over. The Mutiny of 1857 lay half a century behind. The Nizam's dynasty had stood the British test of loyalty. It was he who first stood up for the British against the rebelling hordes. It was he who paved the way for the restoration of law and order. The British would never doubt that House again.

Twenty minutes later the old Nizam emerged from behind the heavy silk curtains. Abid was walking behind him, carrying a handkerchief and two heavily jewelled rings. It was His Highness's habit to remove his jewels before he slept and it was Abid's duty to see he put them on again.

Jacob was already standing up, even before the Nizam had entered the big hall. He bowed humbly and low. In that lowly position he remained till His Highness came up to a chair near him and sat down. Then Jacob raised his head.

Throughout the meeting Jacob remained standing. It was the ritual of the Court. Eagerly he waited for the drop of His Highness's words.

Nothing happened for quite a while. Abid adjusted the table near the Nizam's chair and helped his Royal Master with the rings, as he had always done. Fresh from his sleep, always immaculately dressed whether for a formal reception or an informal meeting with a jeweller, Nizam VI looked at Jacob for the first time and nodded once or twice. He was merely summing up the man who had a jewel of which there was said to

DIAMOND PAPER-WEIGHT

be no other like it in the world. Without further ado, His Highness asked to see it.

Jacob's hand went to his coat pocket. This time the outer one. From it he produced a red velvet cloth and spread it on the table which Abid had placed nearby. Then he produced a packet wrapped in a handkerchief of ordinary white cloth. Carefully he unfolded it, till he came to a parcel of red tissue paper such as Indian jewellers use to wrap their wares.

He put the handkerchief aside. Then proceeded to unwrap the red paper packet. From it he produced the gem and placed it on the velvet cloth. There it lay like an egg with a flat bottom. It was pure white and English cut.

The Nizam looked at it for a while. He picked it up and examined it in an off-hand way. His face registered little amazement but much pleasure. He placed it on a finger to see how it would look set in a ring. But he cancelled that image. It was too big for that, he seemed to say.

'Abid!' he called to his valet near-by and Abid moved forward in an instant. 'Put it on your shirt.'

Abid did as he was told. The Nizam looked at it for a while. Could it be worn as a button on the *sherwani*¹ which he wore on State occasions, he wondered. Then he shook his head. It would be difficult to match it with five more of the same kind, which such a coat would require.

Abid placed it on the table again, but removed the red cloth which was below. Instead, he put under it a letter which was lying by. The idea appealed to the Nizam. The 182½ carat diamond could be used as a paper-weight, as his valet had ventured to suggest.

He nodded to Abid who knew what the nod meant.

Abid smiled gently at Jacob who, unaccustomed to these

1. Long Indian coat.

long restraints, burst out into a broad grin which ran across his face. Jacob mopped his brow for the last time. His troubles were over.

The deal was complete. Abid took Jacob's diamond into the inner room to which the Nizam retired while Jacob remained still bowing low to His Highness Mahboob Ali Khan, Nizam VI of Hyderabad. Abid would attend to the details for the Nizam's nod was his command. Back along the quadrangles Jacob walked to the main palace gate where his chestnut Arab was still waiting for him to return.

The 'details' did not work out as smoothly as Jacob had expected. Soon after the deal that summer afternoon in the Nizam's palace a money dispute arose between Jacob and Abid.

The matter went to court. The British Resident in Hyderabad was made aware of it and, as the matter could not be settled without reference to His Highness, for he was concerned in the deal, his evidence, which had a vital bearing on the dispute, had to be heard.

The Nizam of Hyderabad, as a ruling prince, had sovereign powers. He could not be summoned to appear as a witness in any ordinary court. But the British Resident had to request His Highness 'to be pleased to appear' at the Residency to give his evidence on commission.

While couched in terms of a request, appearance was obligatory by protocol. The Resident spoke in the name of the Viceroy of India, who in turn represented the British Crown. The Nizam had no option but to accede to the Resident's humble request. It was indicated to the Resident that His Highness 'would be pleased' to give evidence.

But to the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad it was an inauspicious omen that anyone in his exalted position should have to drive

DIAMOND PAPER-WEIGHT

to the office of the Viceroy's deputy to appear in person to give evidence in an ordinary money dispute.

In his own courts the Nizam was both judge and jury, the final dispenser of justice, the sole arbiter of what was right and what was wrong. His word was law and his subjects had been brought up to regard it as such. To be called, even requested, to appear in person at the Residency was an insult. It was a blow to his prestige from which he could not easily recover.

Jacob's diamond had brought him bad luck.

The Nizam gave the required evidence in the case, but when he returned to the palace that day he went straight to his room to wash his hands. Then he went to his desk and picked up the paper-weight to which he had now taken a dislike. Off the table edge he ripped the nib-cleaning rag, wrapped the 182½ carat diamond in it and slid it away into the writing table drawer.

There it remained for many years for no one knew he had done this.

Superstition made him reject a brand new palace which he had ordered to be built on the side of the lake Hassin Sagar just because, when he went to see it for the first time, he spotted a *ghodpod* sitting on the gate. A *ghodpod* belongs to the lizard family. It is bigger in size than a squirrel and its English name is iguana. Nature has provided its legs with extraordinary strength. When it clings to a wall no ordinary force can dislodge it. In olden days trained *ghodpods* were used for scaling impregnable walls. A rope was tied to the *ghodpod's* tail and it was allowed to climb to the top of the wall. When it had got a grip on it, a man could pull himself up on the rope tied to its tail. The great Mahratta Chief, Shivaji, often used this method for attacking a fort.

A *ghodpod* somehow came to be regarded as inauspicious by the Moguls perhaps because it was against their forts that it had

been used. Nizam VI, seeing the *ghodpod* on the gate of his new palace, turned back. He never set foot into this palace again. Years later it was given over to the State to be turned into government offices and to-day it houses part of the Central Secretariat.

Nizam VI was a man of his word. He lived a man's life, hunting, shooting, fond of wine, women and song, giving and spending generously because it gave him pleasure to do so. Abid was always at his side until the incident of Jacob's diamond. One night the Nizam was in his cups and before he retired Abid for safety removed his valuable rings from his fingers. The next morning the valet unable to explain his presumptuous but cautious action, explained that His Highness, in a gay mood the night before, had taken off his rings and given them to his valet in joke. These his valet was now replacing.

With his usual lordly gesture, the Nizam touched the rings which the valet had brought to him on a silver tray. 'Abid,' he said, 'the rings are yours. I meant to give them to you'.

While Nizam VI demanded obedience in an exacting form, he placed a high value on courage in the young, even if by his standards it was coupled with a certain impertinence.

So it happened one day when the Military Secretary brought one of his sons to the Nizam. The youngster was less than ten years of age. The boy was in a bad mood that morning and the Nizam teased him unmercifully. As a result the boy turned on His Highness and let loose a string of childish oaths and abuse. The Nizam, instead of chopping off the young man's head, roared with laughter. He prevented the embarrassed father from interfering with the boy and patiently listened to the youngster giving full vent to his temper. The mortification of the Military Secretary was complete, but the Nizam to whom this sort of thing had never happened, sent for the official paper

DIAMOND PAPER-WEIGHT

on which he passed his *firman*s.¹ Then he issued an edict in his own handwriting. It was to the effect that the young man should get a *mansab*² of Rs 500,³ not only during his own lifetime but also as a hereditary gift to his children.

Such largesse resulted in a personal cash debt which at the time of his death stood at a crore of rupees.⁴ The same extravagance in affairs of State left his Treasury empty. But a crore of rupees was as nothing compared with the vast ancestral wealth of his estates and the huge recurring revenue which poured in each year both to the State Treasury and into his personal account.

Mahboob Ali Khan died in a corner room at Faluknuma. With him a great, gallant Victorian passed away. And to the *gadi*⁵ came his son, Osman Ali Khan, the fabulous Mogul.

The year was 1911, the same year in which George V ascended the British throne.

1. Edicts.
2. Monthly gratuity for life.
3. £35.
4. £700,000.
5. Throne.

‘Accomplished Gentleman’

OSMAN Ali Khan, Nizam VII, was a quiet, serious-minded young man, well-disciplined, polite, unostentatious and self-effacing.

His English tutor, Sir Brian Egerton, describes him as ‘an accomplished gentleman of good family and suave manners’.¹

Osman Ali Khan was born on 6th April 1884. His mother’s name was Zehra Begum. All through her life and even after her death, he remained deeply attached to her. From her he derived his deep feeling for religion and his clear-cut ideas on what is right and what is wrong, in fact all that which formed the basis of his philosophy of life.

His childhood was spent behind the high walls of the old palace, Purani Haveli. His father, Nizam VI, was very anxious that he should not be brought up as a spoilt child. Once at the foot of the hill called Maula Ali, on which is built a holy shrine, the young Osman spotted a multi-coloured parrot which caught his fancy. His father asked his attendants to buy it from the owner and give it to Osman. The attendants discovered that the parrot belonged to a little village boy who was unwilling to part with it at any price. A rich landlord standing by forced it out of the poor child’s hand giving a hundred rupee note to the parents in exchange, enough to buy him several parrots. Osman got his parrot, but when his father came down from the hill he heard the cries of the child. He found out what had happened and ordered that the parrot be

1. *Loyal Rulers and leaders of the East*, edited by the Earl of Carnwath.

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returned, adding: 'Let my son cry instead. He should grow up like any other child'. Riches were to give Osman no immunity from human emotions.

Yet on another occasion, Nizam VI behaved differently towards his son. The youngster had dropped a gold coin, called *ashrafi*, from his hand and he stooped to pick it up. 'A bad sign', his father said, 'he might develop a love for money'. The tradition of the Court was that if a piece of gold fell from the hands of the Nizam it was gone and lost. He should never pick it up, nor even take it if it were picked up for him. Where money was concerned the child of the Nizam must not behave like an ordinary person.

Young Osman learned to read and write Urdu and Persian from the palace *maulvi*,¹ from whom he also received religious instruction.

At the turn of the century Lord Curzon, as Viceroy of India, paid an official visit to Hyderabad when he impressed upon Nizam VI the desirability of naming his successor. As Osman Ali Khan was at the time the only living male heir he was declared the heir apparent. This declaration met with the approval of the British Government. Soon afterwards, the vast, sprawling residence of a nobleman was bought for the sixteen-year-old Osman Ali Khan and he was installed there in the charge of Sir Brian Egerton. This estate later came to be known as King Kothi.

It was here that young Osman was groomed for succession to the throne. 'Instruction in riding, shooting and other manly exercises was not neglected', says the official record on him. But his heart was more in books than on the parade ground and the playing fields. In fact, Court officials of the time, of whom few are alive today, recall how reluctantly he would

1. Teacher.

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leave his book of Persian poems to attend his classes of military training. He was by nature a book-worm and not a sportsman. Yet what little he did on the field he did with perfection: tent pegging, riding, sheep cutting. The latter was a novel kind of sport peculiar to that period. A sheep or goat with its vitals removed was suspended between an upright pole and a rectangular bar at forty-five degrees. Osman on a galloping horse, a sword in hand, had to cut the animal in two. This he did with great ease.

Undoubtedly he had his several youthful phases. As a young man he had extravagant tastes. He was fond of rich clothes. His tailors, Messrs John Burton & Co., well-known for their shapely cutting of *sherwanis*,¹ used to make *sarapas* for him. A *sarapa* is a coat entirely embroidered with jewels. In his early days he had several *sarapas* made, each for some grand occasion. One was of pearls, another of emeralds, a third of diamonds and the fourth of rubies.

This luxurious phase disappeared in time.

In the 1920s he developed a fondness for ballroom dancing. He took to this new sport enthusiastically. He started entertaining at his palace every week, sometimes twice a week, with a local orchestra playing jazz. His guests varied according to each occasion, from the stolid British Resident and his wife to the more cosmopolitan gatherings of local jazz fiends of lesser social value. The Peggys and Maggies of Hyderabad at the time had the honour of being whirled around the improvised ballroom of King Kothi by the enthusiastic young ruler who was anxious to become a polished ballroom dancer, while a local dance band played such latest tunes as 'Whispering', and 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles'. It had to be so, for ballroom

1. Long Indian coat.

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dancing was at that time a western sophistication which the landed gentry of Hyderabad had not yet acquired.

Later he developed a fondness for drink. Though a staunch Moslem, he knew how to adapt himself to the ways of the modern world. He drank always moderately, lightly and with decorum. But as with all his hobbies he felt he had to do something about this fashion for drink. Not content with a cellar, he put up a distillery. Soon his desire for perfection made him want to become a connoisseur of wines. His taste in drink, however, did not go much further than champagne and Invalid port.

These phases predominated in the first fifteen years of his reign.

Five years before he ascended the throne, in 1911, he was married to Dulhan Pasha Begum, the daughter of Nawab Jehangir Jung, a nobleman from a side branch of the Nizam's family. By her he had three children. The first was born in February 1907, a son named Nawab Mir Himayat Ali Khan Bahadur. He was given the title Azam Jah by which he is known today. As the eldest son he is the heir apparent, and also carries the title of Prince of Berar.

Ten months later in December of the same year, a second son was born, Nawab Mir Shujaat Ali Khan Bahadur, titled Muazzam Jah. There followed a daughter named Shahzadi Pasha. She has remained unmarried. There is of recent years a superstition in the family that if a Nizam's daughter marries and goes out of the family it causes the death of her father; or if a child is born to her, then also her father dies. No Nizam has ever lived to see a grandchild through his daughter.

Osman Ali Khan, as allowed by Islam, is married to four wives. His second wife is the daughter of Nawab Nazir Jung who was his Army Secretary. The third is Gowher Begum a

niece of Aga Khan. The fourth is the daughter of Nawab Imam Jung Khurshid-ul-Mulk, a nobleman of Paigah and son-in-law of Nizam V.

This, with the few children of these wives, completes the legal picture.

Equally accepted by custom and tradition, however, are the forty-two other women of his zenana, the last and favourite being Leila Begum, a Hindu lady of great charm. He has seven children by her; five sons and two daughters.

In Islam, and more so in the feudal Islamic States, the custom of having a harem is traditional. It is a form of patronage which men of high estate bestow on women by admitting them into the harem. Each Nawab and *jagirdar*¹ had his harem, limited in size only by his status and financial position. The harem of the Nizam of Hyderabad knows no such limitations.

A girl comes into his zenana in one of several ways. In the case of Leila Begum the Nizam's eye fell on her when he was touring his domain. At first sight he was struck by her exquisite beauty. She was a singing girl. When he expressed the wish that she should come into his harem it was regarded as an honour both by the girl and her family.

In other cases, when the family was of modest means and had a daughter particularly attractive, they tried to have the Nizam's attention drawn to her existence in the hope that she might be invited to join the royal harem. Word would come through the senior maid-servants to the women members of his courtiers' households. He would then hear of it tactfully through one of his closer courtiers. 'There is a beautiful girl in the house of So-and-So', they would tell him. It would be up to the Nizam then to make the next move. The girl may be called to the palace to be seen by the Nizam himself, or he may

1. Large landholder

depute one of the senior womenfolk of the palace to go and have a look at her. Then if she was thought equal to the description given of her, she may be invited to form part of the harem.

There was a third way. In the household of the Nizam's mother were her *khannazads*. This meant those of her women attendants who were born or brought up in the house. These *khannazads* formed part of the family circle. They were not servants; they were rather looked upon as dependants. In this household they would be likened to Ladies-in-Waiting; the *khannazads* of the Nizam's household would be male attendants.

The tradition is that those who form part of the *khannazad* can never be dismissed from it. They have certain rights which cannot be lightly ignored. Now on some occasion, like the young Nizam's birthday, his mother would present him with a girl. It was her birthday gift to her son. The best looking girl in the *khannazad* would be chosen by his mother, bathed in sandalwood oil, perfumed with attar, dressed in new clothes of silks and gold and sent to the Nizam with his mother's blessings. This was a token of her affection for him. As he could never refuse a gift from his mother the girl passed into the harem. If he liked her, he might have a child by her. Even if he did not, her security and her future were assured. She would be cared for and looked after in exactly the same way as the other members of his harem. On the other hand, if she caught his fancy and bore him a child she would be referred to as Shahab-e-Aulad. She would then rank higher in status than those who did not have a child by him.

The Nizam's harem is far removed from what portrayed in the pages of *Esquire*, showing a pop-eyed Sultan dressed in colourful silk pyjamas relaxing in languishing poses on soft

satin cushions, surrounded by a bevy of delicate damsels in various forms of chiffoned undress while dark brown Moroccan eunuchs stand by, holding the hookah piece from which the Sultan can smoke.

The Nizam's harem is a serious affair. Though polygamous, it is still based on a certain respect for womanhood. While the women are there at his pleasure, they come to the harem of their own free will and accord, believing it an honour to be privileged to share part of the life of one who is lord of his domain. The harem is his, preserve and only his. Those who live in it are expected to conform to certain recognized standards of morality prescribed by tradition: a faithfulness to the man who keeps them, feeds them, shelters them and sometimes gives them the privilege of bearing him children. There are no eunuchs in attendance in the zenana of Nizam VII, nor any male servants. The harem observes strict purdah and only women maidservants are allowed.

In addition to his four official wives¹ and their children the household consists of

- 42 Begums,
- 33 children still living, from the fifty he has had,
- 46 grandchildren,
- 16 daughters-in-law, married to eight of his sons which works out at roughly two a-piece,
- 44 *khannazads*,
- 25 line-boys,
- and about 1,000 servants.

Over all these he exercises the rights of a Roman *pater familias*. His rights are as inalienable as their allegiance. They are his family; they are also part of his estate.

Until recent years the Nizam's despotic sway was not limited
1. Now only three living.

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to his household. By tradition from the days of Asaf Jah I, the Nizam was undisputed ruler of all Hyderabad. Only one person ever came above the Nizam. He was the Emperor at Delhi.

The position altered slightly after the advent of the British. In form the Nizam retained a semblance of sovereignty; in reality the Nizam continued to rule, but only with the tacit consent of the paramount power, the British. Yet, ironically, the power which the Nizam exercised in his own territory at any given moment was in fact greater than that of the King of England.

The Nizam created his own noblemen, just as his forefathers had done; bestowing on them by letters patent one or other of the distinguished ranks or orders peculiar to the Hyderabad State. Of these, the highest was *Jah*. Second in precedence was *Mulk*; third came *Daula* and fourth *Jung*. Until quite recently these honours were ceremoniously conferred on individuals at a levee. Subsequently they were merely announced in the *Jarida*, the official gazette. They were then solemnly recorded in the College of Heraldry.

While Nizam VII always lived in King Kothi, he built the famous Durbar Hall within the walls of the older palace, Chow Mahalla. It was here that he gave an audience to his noblemen and his courtiers on special occasions such as his birthday, *Id* day, which was the Moslem New Year, and *Nowroze*, the Persian New Year.

The hall, well-proportioned, had a rich Eastern setting. A Mogul garden spread in front of it, surrounded by tall slender cypresses and palms. Fountains played in their midst. The architecture could be described as late Mogul, an oriental version of the Renaissance. Indo-Saracenic arches and Mogul towers and turrets predominated.

White marble steps led to the Hall through these arches.

There was a collonade of three rows of pillars. The Hall itself was in marble, open towards the garden on one side, but enclosed on the other three sides. Here again was built a gallery, appropriately screened, behind which the ladies of the Court could sit and watch the Court ceremonies being performed without being seen by the men below.

From the ceiling, embossed with ornate floral designs, hung Bohemian glass chandeliers always brightly lit, for the Durbars were held at night. At the far end of this large Hall was a white marble throne facing the entrance. At each corner of it stood a tall crystal column bearing clusters of yellow incandescent bulbs in the shape of the Nizam's turban.

The purpose of a Durbar was two-fold. It gave the Nizam an occasion to bestow honours on selected members of his Government or Court. It also gave his noblemen and courtiers an opportunity to pay homage to him. This was done by offering *nazars* in token of fealty and allegiance. A *nazar* is a gift of gold or silver coins, varying in number with the position and purse of the giver.

So the Court would gather on the appointed day with the noblemen and officials, privileged to be commanded to attend, arriving after dinner, around nine o'clock in the evening. All would be especially overdressed for the occasion, some sporting costly shawls from Kashmir or Benares, others in rich silks and brocades of every colour and design. It was generally conceded that the higher the rank, the more ornate should the garment be. Around the Hall, to lend added Mogul colour, would stand the chosen Arab guards bearing damascened swords and jewelled daggers. During the evening musicians would play music suited to a Mogul Court and sing odes written especially for the occasion.

At the appointed time the Nizam would arrive. Nizam VII

did not keep his Court waiting like his father. Even before he entered the hall the hum of conversation would die down, the noblemen, courtiers and officials shuffling themselves into position, according to their rank and seniority.

He would enter through a side door accompanied by his sons and daughters. The daughters would wend their way to the gallery to join the other purdah women; the sons would accompany him to the throne.

At sight of him the assembly, which would be standing, would bend low and make a dozen or more salutations reaching almost to the ground and then saluting with scooping gestures of the right hand all the way up in that same form. This salutation is the *adab*. The obeisance paid would be distinct and absolute and he would in turn acknowledge it by placing his right hand over his heart.

The throne was only a raised marble platform, square in shape, completely unadorned, except for a Persian carpet, on which crosslegged he would sit, and a large and long rolled cushion of yellow satin on which he would recline in true oriental fashion. Behind him would sit his sons.

Then one by one the courtiers would come up. With the upturned palm of their right hand held over the left hand, they would offer their coins of gold or silver on a white handkerchief, bowing deeply as they came to him with their offering. The Nizam would take the coins and pass them on to whoever was performing the function of his personal Treasurer. When this was done the courtier would return to his place, still bowing as he retreated without turning around, for no one can turn his back on the Nizam.

So the ceremony would go on for several hours, the *nazars* varying in value but never in the manner of presentation. Only when the last *nazar* was paid would the ceremony conclude,

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after which the Nizam would mingle for a while with his guests and then the 'accomplished gentleman of good family and suave manners' would leave the Durbar Hall.

The Durbars of Nizam VII of Hyderabad will perhaps be the last of the Mogul Courts.

The Jeweller Felt Giddy

I NEVER realized how fabulous he was until I heard a tale from the lips of a wealthy jeweller who visited him during the second world war. Money was easy to come by at that time and the jewellers of India were doing a roaring trade with a new crop of *nouveaux riches* rising out of the black markets of India buying expensive jewels alike for wife and mistress. Even so it was not too easy to find a buyer for the two beautiful 25-carat rubies which had come into the hands of this jeweller. Someone suggested to him that he should show them to the Nizam of Hyderabad.

With suitable introductions, the jeweller arrived in Hyderabad one day, carrying the rubies on his person. He stayed in the city as a guest of one of the Nawabs whose father and grandfather had been in close touch with the royal house, having loyally served two generations of Nizams.

Through his host an audience with the Nizam was sought. This was granted. A day or two later, suitably attired in his best London-cut suit wearing a silk shirt and moiré tie, heavily lavendered, the jeweller arrived at the palace with the two rubies. After the formal courtesies were exchanged between the jeweller and his prospective buyer, the Nizam asked to see the rubies which had been so highly praised to him.

Quickly the jeweller produced them from his inner pocket and proudly laid them before the Nizam. The Nizam looked at them closely, betraying no astonishment at their purity or size.

Without saying another word he signalled to his attendant to come over and in a low voice gave him a command. The palace official whisked away to do his bidding.

Not much was said until from another part of the palace a large steel trunk arrived which was placed near the feet of the Nizam, who asked his attendant to unlock it. The trunk appeared to be full of little bags of no particular charm or attraction. They were virtually dumped together and the trunk was full of them.

After looking carefully for a few minutes at this assortment of bags, the Nizam picked one up and untied its cord. He dipped his hand into the bag and drew from it some two dozen rubies of various shapes and sizes which he put on the table for the jeweller to see.

'It was like a schoolboy producing marbles from his pocket', the jeweller said to me. 'I became quite speechless. In comparison with what he produced, the two beautiful gems which I had brought with me looked mere baubles.'

When the jeweller regained his voice he expressed his amazement and admiration at the rubies laid before him. The Nizam smiled and looked into the trunk again. He picked up another bag and from it he extracted a handful of emeralds. From yet another he drew pearls, and so on until almost every precious gem, each of incomparable beauty lay before the astonished jeweller's eyes.

Nor was this the only trunk. For this fabulous wealth, unestimable by anyone, had been lying for years unset and unmounted, like pebbles, in bags stored in various trunks in the palace strongroom. No jeweller can ever value such priceless gems for if they were put on the market all at once, they would wreck it.

After a few minutes the Nizam modestly asked the jeweller

THE JEWELLER FELT GIDDY

his opinion of some of the stones. The jeweller, mopping his brow, frankly admitted that he was feeling giddy.

The Nizam then politely said, 'You see, I have no immediate need for rubies at present. Your stones are very good. You should get a very good price for them.'

With the exchange of a few more formal courtesies, the audience with the Nizam was over. When the jeweller stepped into his car he noticed that his tie had slipped below his collar and his feeling of giddiness persisted. Yet this was one of the leading jewellers of India, accustomed to handling beautiful jewellery ever since he was a boy and who could count among his clients some of the richest Princes in the country.

That was when my interest in the Nizam was first aroused. I began to listen for tales of him and to look for reports of his daily life, until in time he became for me the Fabulous Mogul.

* * * * *

It was, I understand, in the toe of a slipper in Chow Mahalla that, after the death of Nizam VI, Jacob's diamond was found. Nizam VII did not have the same superstition which his late father had. He had it mounted on a gold base of filigree work and put it away in a yellow box. He named it 'The Nizam'.

Only half a dozen people have laid eyes on this 182½ carat diamond which weighs seventy carats more than the Kohinoor in the Imperial Crown. The Aga Khan is said to have offered nearly a £1,000,000 for it — a standing offer which has never been accepted. The Nizam would have no particular use for the extra paper money it would bring.

After the advent of the new Indian régime, Nizam VII decided to call Dinshah J. Gazdar, of Gazdar Ltd., the well-known jewellers, to value some of this fabulous jewellery. Gazdar's job was to present a report to the Nizam's Jewellery Commit-

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tee on some of the objects of art and on the jewellery which was the personal property of the Nizam.

Gazdar arrived in Hyderabad on 11th January and stayed a few days, during which he saw the art collection in Falaknuma Castle and the jewels in the strong room of King Kothi. He began by looking at Mogul enamels consisting of cups, plates, teapots, milk jugs, decorative parrots, *golabashis* or rosewater-sprinklers, *pan* boxes, trays, bowls. They were all studded with precious stones. He also saw four enamel elephants, a pair of camels and a horse. Next came the jades carved and set with gems; then the crystals.

The next two days Gazdar spent at King Kothi inspecting and valuing the collection of jewellery, some pieces of which were heirlooms. The strong room, in which they were kept, was a long rectangular room approximately 120 feet long and 40 feet wide. In addition to Jacob's diamond he saw a rare unmounted set of twenty-two emeralds, the total weight of which was 420 carats. The largest stone in this set was 50 carats, the smallest about 10 carats. 'Their colour is deep green,' Gazdar later wrote in his report, 'their lustre perfect'.

The Nizam was in the room when Gazdar was looking over this set and he silently watched the jeweller as he turned over each stone. When he had finished his examination, the Nizam said to the jeweller, 'These I consider worth Rs 500,000.'¹

Gazdar shook his head. 'No, Your Exalted Highness, I value them at Rs 5,500,000!'²

The Nizam's eyes lit up. excitedly he shouted to the little group of officials at the other end of the room, 'Arre,³ Gazdar says the emeralds are worth Rs 5,500,000!' And all the courtiers

1. £35,000.

2. £385,000.

3. Exclamatory word, equivalent to 'Hey there!'.



H.H. Nizam VII in 1911 on his return from Delhi where he attended the Durbar held on the occasion of the Coronation of King George V. He had just been given a G.C.S.I. which he is wearing beneath the Coronation Medal.



HEH Nizam VII on his marriage to his first wife Dulhan Pasha Begum in 1906. On his arms he has various pieces of jewellery and the sword is the *Shamsheer Murasa Khurd*, the small sword studded with precious stones.

automatically nodded their heads in agreement, as was the ritual, with their eyes popping out to show amazement. It really made little difference to the Nizam what the emeralds were worth, for it was a flea-bite in terms of his whole collection. His momentary delight was that his own conservative estimate was so completely wrong.

In the pick of the emerald collection, Gazdar included five rings, each with a square-cut, 25-carat, flawless stone and a set of armlets, the centre emerald of which weighed 100 carats. There was also a most exquisite sword, richly studded with gems. Gazdar referred to this in his report as 'the permanent guardian of the ancient treasures of His Exalted Highness the Nizam'.

Exquisite eastern jewellery was also shown to Gazdar. Of these he said: 'I have never set eyes on such jewels before. Each piece is beautifully enamelled on the back in colours obtainable only after pounding precious stones. To-day if I were asked to produce even a small replica of one of these I would be unable to do so, for these are unique specimens of a lost art. The eastern jewellery collection of His Exalted Highness is one of the finest in the world, and lodged as it is in its ancestral home, it reflects the splendour of the great Asaf Jah dynasty.'

Gazdar read his report to His Exalted Highness in the drawing-room of King Kothi the day before he left. Some ten or twelve palace officials were present.

When he came to the flowery sentence about the splendour of the Asaf Jah dynasty, the Nizam excitedly clapped his hands with delight and said 'Very good, very good. Please read that again'. It was the romance which the jeweller wove around the jewels which appealed to the Nizam even more than their estimated value.

At the end of four days of valuation, Gazdar rested for a

while at the Rock Castle hotel, sipping hot coffee in the cool January air. Even so he complained that the four enamel elephants he had seen in the show case at Falaknuma kept dancing before his eyes and their colour was not pink.

* * * * *

Wealth beyond a certain stage becomes redundant. That of the Nizam, his personal wealth, is estimated at Rs 1,350,000,000¹. Of this Rs 350,000,000² is in liquid cash, Rs 500,000,000³ is in jewellery and a like amount in real estate. These figures are only approximate, for those who are close to the Nizam are not very communicative on the subject.

In addition to this personal wealth, the Nizams have owned Crown lands known as the *Sarf-e-khas*. The revenue from these lands was Rs 35,000,000⁴ annually. The estate itself was estimated to be worth about Rs 1,000,000,000.⁵

The management of the *Sarf-e-khas* has always been in the hands of the rulers. The estate devolved from generation to generation in lineal descent from the first Nizam. It was an appendage to the *gadi*.⁶ As in the case of a baronetcy or a peerage trust, the purpose of the *Sarf-e-khas* was to ensure that the incumbent would be able to maintain the dignity of the dynasty. The income from the *Sarf-e-khas* belonged to the ruler for life. He could do as he liked with it, but he could not alienate any part of the property itself.

State property was again distinct from this. It was referred to as *Diwani*, meaning that which was administered by the

1. Approx. £100 million.

2. £25,500,000.

3. £35,000,000.

4. £2,500,000.

5. £70 million.

6. Throne.

Diwan or Chief Minister. *Diwani* property belonged to the Hyderabad State Government. From its revenue the State was administered; from it also the ruler got his Privy Purse which, in the case of the Nizams, was fixed half a century ago at Rs 5,000,000.¹

While the Nizam's wealth has been equalled and may even have been surpassed elsewhere in the world, it was his liquid cash, which for years lay idle in his coffers, and his jewels that were difficult to match. The wealth of the world's well-known multi-millionaires is usually locked up; that of the Nizam is easily convertible into cash. That is its power.

To every worthy cause in India, and sometimes even elsewhere in the world, the Nizam gave generously, in a manner befitting his exalted status. During two years he sanctioned, in his capacity as ruler, about Rs 300,000,000² as war gifts. About as much again was his contribution to the various war loans raised by the British in India. Nor was all his contribution from his State Treasury. He gave away from his own private resources about Rs 20,000,000.³

In 1918, at the end of the first World War he was, by reason of his contribution to Britain's war effort, made an Honorary Lieutenant-General of the British Army and in the New Year's Honours list of 1918 he was elevated by the late King George V from 'His Highness' to 'His Exalted Highness'. In a letter dated 24th January 1918, the King-Emperor conferred upon him the title of 'Faithful Ally of the British Government'.

A 21-gun salute signalled his arrival in any part of the British Empire. He was the only Indian Prince entitled to this salute. Of the others no one rated more than 19.

1. £350,000.

2. £23,000,000.

3. £1,500,000.

The City of Hyder

THE original name of Hyderabad, the capital, was Chichlam. One of the Qutub Shah kings, romantically inclined, renamed it Bhagnagar after his favourite mistress Bhagmati.

The Qutub Shahs held sway during the seventeenth century until Aurangzeb conquered Golconda and annexed it to the Mogul Empire. In the pages of Indian history the Qutub Shahs came to be known by their monuments, mosques and mistresses. Kings and mistresses are now entombed side by side not far from the Golconda fort outside Hyderabad city. Huge monuments cover them. The legend, however, survives.

There were three notable mistresses belonging to the Qutub Shah period. Of these, Bhagmati was the most famous; the other two were Pemamati and Taramati. That Bhagmati was the outstanding of the three is only surmised from the honour accorded her of having Chichlam renamed Bhagnagar after her.

Pemamati is credited with having built a mosque which still stands on the road from Golconda fort to Osman Sagar, although history is unable to say with any measure of accuracy to which of the Qutub Shahs the fair damsel belonged. Archaeologists regard her mosque as an interesting piece of architecture because of its huge slabs and monolithic pillars. Its only defect is that it is unfinished. Her devotion to religion appears to have been too frequently interrupted by the demands of her king, leaving her little time to supervise the erection and completion of her mosque. For the good she did on earth, she was given burial in the compound of the royal tombs in Golconda.

THE CITY OF HYDER

On her tomb is inscribed a floral tribute in Persian which says: 'From the beginning she was a flower of heaven.' It was in keeping with an epoch in which there was no shortage of sentimental expression.

The third of Les Girls of the Qutub Shah period was Taramati, who came later in point of time and had a pavilion built and dedicated to herself. The legend says that she used to stretch a rope from this pavilion to the top of Golconda fort. Balancing on the rope she would come over, singing and dancing, while an impatient and amorous king waited for her. The distance from the pavilion to the top of the fort would be roughly half a mile.

From Bhagnagar the name was changed to Hyderabad. It was so named after Hazrat¹ Ali Hyder, the Fourth Caliph of Islam. Thus Hyderabad would mean the City of Hyder.

Hyderabad began to acquire with the Moguls and their Viceroy, Asaf Jah I, a certain religious tone which it still retains. As in most oriental cities this is accentuated and evidenced more at dusk and in the evening hours than in the broad glare of the midday sun. It is after sunset that a certain charm hangs around the place. A haze of darkness lends mystery.

It was on one such evening that, on one of my visits to Hyderabad, I went to see the adjacent tombs of the two Moslem saints, Yusuf Saheb and Sheriff Saheb. They were brothers, some say companions, who came with Aurangzeb when the Mogul led his first attack on Golconda in 1687. The army camped for the night in the open plain on the Deccan when a storm came over the Vindhya, blowing everything before it. Tents fell down, lights went out; Aurangzeb's camp was in utter chaos. The Emperor was visibly shaken at the expression of the wrath of God on his advancing army. Rallying his close
1. Moslem equivalent of saint.

followers he came out to view the havoc the storm was causing. All was darkness ahead except for a light seen burning in one tent which remained standing, untouched by the angry storm. Hurriedly a courier was despatched to see who was inside it.

On his return the courier reported that two soldiers were in that tent, reading the holy Koran. No ordinary persons could have remained unaffected by that storm, the Emperor and his men knew. After the campaign Aurangzeb returned to the north; but the two soldiers remained behind in Hyderabad, where they died — simultaneously, it is said. They were buried side by side. And near their adjacent tombs a mosque was built and in time it became a holy shrine.

The tombs of these saints are in the heart of Hyderabad city, two furlongs away from the railway station of Nampalli. We drove there in our station wagon through narrow lanes, past rows of little shops selling a variety of wares from hurricane lamps to sweetmeats. The road was paved with cowdung; it was crude, bumpy, primitive. As we swung right at the end of it, we were surrounded by groups of mendicant pilgrims who swarmed around us.

We got out and walked across the cobbled pavement which led to the mosque. At its entrance were dozens of little flower shops, makeshift arrangements of bamboo and straw. The air was filled with the strong aroma of mogra and jasmin flowers, of which there were basketfuls in these shops. Roses too, the highly scented Indian variety which flower in a quick bloom and as quickly fade away. We each bought a handful, wrapped in a dry leaf and tied together with a thin cotton string. We also bought incense sticks to burn at the tombs.

The air was full of heavy perfume such as you only get in the Orient. The incense burning in the mosque blended with

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the rich scent of mogra and jasmin and I became quickly aware that I was in the precincts of a Moslem shrine.

At the steps of the mosque we took off our shoes. With our handkerchiefs covering our heads we walked over the marbled floor. Bare feet and covered heads is the prescribed form for pilgrims to all Moslem shrines.

The mosque itself was on the right with the familiar carved screen. Men were kneeling before it in prayer. On the left, through a low arch, we entered the room in which the two tombs lay.

It was around eight in the evening of that day. The sun had set over an hour ago. The darkness had fast set in. All was quiet in the little room. A silken cloth of golden-yellow covered each tomb. On these, flowers were strewn. Incense sticks burned in an urn at one end. Around the tombs, men, women and children bowed in reverence, their heads touching the ground.

It was a deeply moving sight. Only faith could have inspired it, a deep abiding faith.

We paid our respects and came away, collected our shoes and returned to the car. The beggars were back again, all around us, asking for alms in the name of the saints. They needed every anna we could spare.

This was my first whiff of Hyderabad, a little Moslem-ruled island in the sea of Hindu India.

Mecca Masjid, yet another landmark of Islam in Hyderabad, reverberated with a similar religious fervour. It is the most impressive of the many mosques which dot the city. A *masjid* is a mosque. The difference between Mecca Masjid and the other mosques was as the difference between a cathedral and smaller churches.

In Mecca Masjid are the tombs of the present Nizam's father

and grandfather and other close members of the family — about a dozen of them, lying side by side along the high marbled stretch which stands some four feet from the ground, at right angles to the edge of the pavilion which constitutes the mosque itself. White sheets covered each royal tomb, their ends held down with marble weights.

The tombs are small. Every time there is a death in the royal family the smooth marbled floor is broken into and dug down to the ground. This part of the Masjid — the raised marble stretch — is the personal property of the Nizam, a private graveyard reserved for the royal family. It forms part of the *Sarf-e-khas*. The rest of the Masjid belongs to the State. The two estates — one personal, the other State — lie side by side here in Mecca Masjid.

The attendant who tended the tombs regarded himself as being closer to the Nizam than the Superintendent in charge of the mosque. The eyes of this attendant lit up as he emphasized that the tombs were in his care. There was created in those who served the Nizam a feeling of belonging to his personal estate, as different from being a servant of the state government. It was the difference between the gardener of Sandringham and the park-keeper of Hyde Park.

As I passed the tombs and saw the look on the faces of those privileged to attend to them, I understood something of the meaning of the reverence which those born and bred under the feudal system have for their lord. Despite its undemocratic, medieval character, a feudal State seemed to do more good than harm to the hordes of uneducated masses who have grown up in it. In a feudal state, a bad ruler was an ill-fated mishap for the people. A bad administration in a democratic state, on the other hand, was a misfortune which the people had brought upon themselves. The subjects of a feudal state were trained

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from birth to endure a bad ruler whom they had inherited. The subjects of a democracy had only themselves to blame for the choice of the bad government which they put into power. Islam and its practice played an important part in shaping this outlook of abandonment to powers spiritual, which together with powers temporal, were inherent in their ruler. They believed that the hand of God undoubtedly guided the line of succession while it played no part whatever in sordid politics on election day.

Islam fostered a common brotherhood in man. This was reflected in the way they ate their food and said their prayers. A more spontaneous feeling of equality was fostered between man and man which all the guarantees of the democratic constitution did not seem to inspire. Right or wrong it was their firm belief that the old feudal state was better for them than the new regime. It was pointless arguing against it because it was based not on reason but on faith.

Here in the graveyard beside the mosque was evidence of all the essential qualities of the old estate: *izzat*, which meant honour, *zaban* which meant word of honour. No law courts seemed necessary to enforce them. They were self-obligatory, having an intangible value of their own.

* * * * *

While in no way underestimating the religious significance of the tombs of the two saints and Mecca Masjid, Nizam VII appears to have the deepest attachment for the shrine on the hill, known as Maula Ali.

Maula Ali is only another name for Hazrat Ali, after whom the city of Hyderabad takes its name.

While to all Moslems the name of this disciple of Mahomed, who was also his son-in-law, is holy, a particular sect of Islam

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known as the Shias hold that Hazrat Ali was the rightful successor to the Prophet and as such should be regarded as the first Caliph of Islam. Orthodox Moslems, the Sunnis, regard him as only the fourth in the holy hierarchy.

The family of the Nizams of Hyderabad have for generations been Sunnis, following the orthodox pattern. Nizam VII, however, is believed to hold the Shia belief, chiefly because of his mother, a staunch Shia, whose fervour of belief came to be shared by her son.

I came to know of the shrine on Maula Ali quite by chance. I heard of it from a venerable Begum who narrated the incident of the parrot which had taken place at the foot of that hill. She had said it was some twenty miles away, out of the city.

Later that day, when I went to lunch with Prince Muazzam Jah, the second son of the Nizam, I was standing on the terrace of his residence when the various distant landmarks were pointed out to me by one of his entourage. To the right was Falaknuma and below, hidden behind a cluster of foliage, was King Kothi, the Nizam's palace. In front of us was the lake Osman Sagar. In another direction though far away was the Golconda fort, and to our left was the Banjara or Jubilee Hill.

The Prince was standing beside me quietly murmuring a prayer, at the end of which I noticed he bowed his head slightly in a certain direction. It was just then that I asked: 'Where is this place Maula Ali?'

'I was just paying my respects to it', the Prince replied. The name had cropped up three times that day, the first time I had ever heard it. It was a landmark which I felt had to be seen.

By now it began to rain and we came away from the terrace to sit in the loggia and chat on a variety of topics: India's foreign policy, our recent pact with the Chinese, the bleak future of the Princes and even such mundane matters as income

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tax and the new estate and death duties. Occasionally I would look out at the landscape growing dimmer through the mist of rain. During a lull in the conversation I asked the Prince, 'Can one visit Maula Ali?'

'Don't be silly', was his friendly reply, spoken with that slight stutter which through the years I had come to know so well.

'Why?' I asked, persisting.

'Well, it is so far away and it is raining and it is high up on a hill. Some other time when you come to Hyderabad you can see it.'

I looked across through the haze again. It was really pouring hard and it seemed foolish to persist.

During lunch, at which a great variety of dishes, including English and Moglai food, was served, I noticed that the rain had stopped and within a few minutes the sun was shining brightly. At an opportune moment I repeated my desire to see the shrine on the hill and asked the Prince whether he would lend me a car to drive up to it, to which he readily agreed, detailing one of his secretaries, Henry Luschwitz, to accompany me.

Around three o'clock that afternoon we drove in a cream, open roadster, a Packard, through the suburbs of Hyderabad to the foot of the hill, Maula Ali. As we neared it I saw a cluster of low-built open-faced dwellings. They were obviously old although a recent whitewash made them look fresh and clean. They were completely deserted, for their usefulness was only at the time of pilgrimage to give shelter to the thousands who came as pilgrims at a particular time of the year. Then we drove through a high ornamental archway into a narrow cobblestoned courtyard, above which rose the 495 steps that led to the shrine at the top.

There were a handful of fakirs who moved about us as we stepped out of the car and I asked if it was permissible for us to go up. They indicated that there was no objection and we started to climb the steps when one of the fakirs shouted out to us that we must remove our shoes. This we immediately did.

The first hundred steps were easy, but thereafter our pace slowed down for the climb was steep. We sat down on the low parapet to regain our breath when two men, who formed part of the day and night guard that watched over the shrine, joined us; one was a typical Moslem with a scraggy beard, carrying with him a bundle which probably contained his evening meal and his *kua*¹ of water. The other, a younger man, was wearing a khaki bérét. With them we slowly walked up the rest of the steps, pausing at frequent intervals on the way. During these intervals we chatted to them and I learned that this shrine was built because many years ago the saint had appeared in a dream indicating that it was on this hill that he had prayed and his finger prints were there on the rock.

'Can that be seen now?' I asked one of the men.

'Yes, the rock is in the shrine and can be seen.'

On the way up, one of the guards told us that each year the present Nizam himself walks up these 495 steps to the shrine. And he had done so even this year. I thought this an incredible performance by a man of seventy. It was his faith that gave him the physical endurance. 'He walks quickly with short brisk steps. Then he stops and gets his breath, and walks up briskly again', the guard said.

At intervals along these steps were a few low buildings one of which was a mosque and the others places of shelter. At the top there was a huge courtyard, on the four sides of which were the humble abodes of those who lived at the shrine. On

1. A long-necked drinking vessel.

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one side of the courtyard was a narrow archway leading to another smaller courtyard, but as we reached this open gate, panting, we were crestfallen at seeing a notice board which read: NON-MUSLIMS ARE NOT PERMITTED BEYOND THIS POINT.

We looked at each other, disappointed, when one of the men who had accompanied us bade me enter. For a moment I wondered whether he was mistaking me for one of their faith and hesitated to go in, but when the invitation was also extended to Henry, who wore a solar topee, the unmistakable mark of the foreigner – I knew that the restriction had been waived for us.

On the right of this little courtyard was a typical Moslem shrine with incense sticks burning. I had covered my head with a handkerchief as was customary and Henry was puzzled whether he should bare his head as in a church or whether he should cover it as I was doing. The guard helped him by saying that as he was 'foreign', his hat should be removed.

I stood for a moment at the edge of the raised plinth where the shrine began, when to my amazement, the guard beckoned me in. Facing us were two hanging curtains, ornate with coloured gems and in front was a wall about six feet high and four feet wide, from which also hung a larger but similar curtain. It was behind this wall that I was shown a piece of the rock worn out as the dream has told. Around it the sweet-smelling sandalwood paste had been plastered. As I felt the rock with my fingers I could feel it move almost with life partly because my pulse was beating through my fingers, and partly also because I felt something of the deep fervour of that place. When I came back to the edge of the shrine there was Henry still respectfully standing away. The guard looked at him and a moment later something must have crossed his mind, for

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Henry also was beckoned in to see the mark in the rock behind the wall. We had come together and should not be treated differently.

We walked silently out and as we descended the steps, Henry broke the silence by saying: 'I didn't think we'd ever be allowed in'. I explained that those who respect a holy place are not usually barred from it.

Maula Ali was more than a hill. I could not help feeling that because of its association with the saint after whom it was named, it had a profound significance for Nizam VII. It was only after my meeting with the Nizam that I understood the depth of this faith. It alone had sustained him through the dark days of the military invasion of Hyderabad in 1948, when power and wealth which he had coveted as a younger man were of little avail.

* * * * *

Not far from these ancient landmarks were the monuments of wise administration which had grown up in recent years, recording the progress which this State had made under the progressive rule of Osman Ali Khan and his hand-picked administrators. These included such notables as Sir Akbar Hydari and Sir Mirza Ismail. The latter left his mark architecturally, building ornamental arches in the most fantastic and remote places; the former's contribution would appear to be more solid in the field of administration.

It was Sir Akbar who gave Hyderabad its long stretches of broad asphalt roads, kept even to-day in perfect condition, running through the city and to the outskirts. Abid Road is the city's main thoroughfare, named after the valet of the late Nizam. That this main artery of the city happens to be flanked with little tradesmen's shops selling pots and pans is no fault of

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its ambitious designer. The overall idea, however, remains impressive — that of a main road tapering down through the ancient arches to the bridge spanning the river Musi, somewhat like the bridges over the Nile in Cairo, to the new city built across the river. Then as you look back you see the picturesque minarets of the old city silhouetted against the grey dusky sky — a Moslem city mounted against an Oriental blue heaven.

Through the years there came to Hyderabad modern ideas which filtered through the medieval feudalism, bringing green fields to areas which were once parched deserts, bringing sanitation and clean drinking water where there was none before. Education was not neglected as can be seen from the impressive array of buildings that go to make up Osmania University, endowed by His Exalted Highness. With the growth of modern civilization there even came into being a sewage system.

‘But’, said the writer Nihal Singh,¹ ‘in certain parts of the town the old conditions prevail, as if the hands of the clock of time have scarcely moved’.

Nihal Singh’s picture of the old city cannot be improved upon. ‘The tradespeople sit, pictures of patience, upon the floor in their long verandah-like shops, just as their forefathers sat centuries ago, their wares, tied in neat bundles, carefully stowed away upon shelves. Rainbow-hued silks and co. ns, tapestries, embroideries and carpets of every description, hanging across the front of their shops, flutter in the breeze like gorgeous banners and buntings, as if the city were permanently *en fête*.

‘The goldsmiths and silversmiths sit in little cubicles open at the front, before low stools, a hundred tiny tools lying near at hand. The workers in brass and copper beat or mould vessels into shapes which have known no variation for thousands of years, without reference to any sketch or pattern. Pots and pans

1. *The Nizam and the British Empire*, p. . . .

neatly arranged within the shops, with the tropical sun shining upon them, produce an effect to be seen only in the Orient.

'A potter working at his wheel not far off, turns out household utensils which, in size and form, have remained unaltered through the centuries. Each piece is made with care, though it may fetch only a pice¹ or two . . .

'Men sit cross-legged stringing jasmine buds into garlands. Other tradespeople sell spices and betel leaves for preparing *pan*,² or sweetmeats, or fruits of every description. Bits of highly-spiced meat stuck on skewers are roasting over open braziers.

'The poorly dressed, underfed looking men sitting behind heaps of grain and pulses in their dingy little shops may appear to be hovering on the brink of bankruptcy, yet they may be transacting a business amounting to thousands of rupees a day.'

All this can be seen within one square mile around the Char Minar, an ornamental building originally intended to be a theological school but which to-day is only the focal point around which the city revolves, a monument used until recently as the emblem of the State on its currency and postage stamps, but otherwise of no particular use at all.

1. Equivalent[†] of a farthing.

2. The green leaf in which betel-nut is chewed.



HHH Nizam VII on his Silver Jubilee, 13th February



HEH Nizam VII replying to a public address on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee. Framed behind him is a hand-written copy of the Urdu National Anthem which was composed by the Nizam in his youth.

The Palace 'Below the Heavens

ONE morning we drove to Falaknuma, the castle on the hill or, as its name implied, the palace below the heavens. It was built by the Paigah Amir,¹ Vikhar-ul-Omara, in the 1880s. But later, faced with bankruptcy, he offered it to Nizam VI as a gift.

Nizam VI accepted the offering and, as was probably understood beforehand, the Paigah Amir received a large sum of money as a gift in return, which tided the Amir over his financial crisis.

Nizam VI reserved Falaknuma for the visits of the Viceroys of India and such personalities as the Archduke Ferdinand and members of the British Royal House. And, of course, he often stayed there himself.

It was here that, with the Archduke Ferdinand, he had a shooting match. A rupee coin was tossed into the air and each tried his skill to shoot at the coin before it fell to the ground. The Archduke Ferdinand tried first, but missed. The Nizam hit the rupee. This was not difficult for one who was perhaps the finest shot in India at the time. The family album records this incident with pictures now almost blurred.

A long winding road leads to Falaknuma from the great palace gate on the main road below. The palace is about seventy-five years old, but architecturally difficult to place in any known period.

As you reach the top of the winding road, you pass once
1. The brightest order of feudal lords under the Nizams. *Paigah* was the tenure; *Amir* meant chief or nobleman.

again through a high archway and come out to a large quadrangle in the centre of which is a built-in lawn.

Our car pulled up at the bottom of two flights of steps, heavily marbled, which took us to 'the first floor where the palace really begins. Below the steps are rooms for the staff and the ADC's, and below these are cellars — once stocked with rich wines.

Up the stairs we came to a long wide verandah which goes around the front of the palace. Heavy ornate lamps of wrought iron and wine-coloured Venetian glass hang from the ceilings. They are in fact the only decoration on that large semi-circular verandah, except for a couple of oversized jars of fantastic size and probably of some equally fantastic period.

'The first room on the right, as you face the palace with your back to the garden, is a little study or writing room. There is an old carved writing table in the centre of the room, with a black leather top. Beside it is a revolving Victorian chair. Above it hangs a six-arm chandelier of crystal in the Lalique style of glass with three lamps sprouting from each arm.

Yellow gold and shades of yellow merging into brown provide the colour scheme of this room intended for the use of the late Nizam and frequently used by him on his periodical visits to this palace. Curtains of the same rich colour stand out against doors of heavy blackwood. There are delicate little arm-chairs in the room and a *chaise longue* to relax on after a strenuous hour or two at the desk, signing State papers. All these chairs are uniformly covered in the same yellow-gold plush. The whole room looks as fresh as if it had been lived in yesterday.

On one side, on a table, stands a huge chiming clock, four feet high and some three feet wide. Encased in black, it is embossed with a design of gold, the sort of clock which could only have been made to order for a Spanish grandee long

years before the Spaniards abolished that noble order. I was even more surprised to see it work, keeping precise time with my little Swiss wristwatch which I had bought from Turler's famous shop in Zurich a few months before.

On the walls of the study were pictures of the two sons of the present Nizam, an odd painting of still-life and a certificate from the University of Osmania, which Nizam VII had himself founded, and which registered its appreciation by conferring on its patron and founder a high literary degree.

It was in this room on the *chaise longue* that Nizam VI died. Contrary to custom the womenfolk from the harem broke purdah and came rushing in to pay their last respects. Those who saw this scene described it as one of tense emotion as if the father of a great big family had passed away and his children had gathered around to mourn his death.

Immediately word was sent to King Kothi to the twenty-seven-year-old heir-apparent, Osman Ali Khan, who came quickly to Falaknuma. With arms folded, he stood beside the body of his father, paying his respect in the traditional fashion. Then he issued instructions that the body be taken to Chow Mahalla, the ancestral palace, from where, bathed and anointed, it was ceremoniously taken in procession to Mecca Masjid for burial.

Behind this study where Nizam VI died is a bedroom, kept ready even now for use at a moment's notice. A mosquito curtain still hangs over the huge brass bed to keep away the mosquitoes which must have nibbled at many a Viceroy of India. For a moment, as I walked into the room, I wondered if I was intruding on anyone's privacy.

But the attendant assured me no one was living there now. The room could not be used by just anyone, he said. Only the late Nizam, the Duke of Windsor when he came as Prince of

Wales, the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and a handful of Viceroys of India had slept in that bed. No one of lower rank, he assured me.

'Not even Pandit Nehru?' I asked. The attendant, embarrassed shook his head.

Behind this room was yet another bedroom and another dressing room. In fact a series of bedrooms and dressing rooms with intercommunicating doors were in this royal wing of Falaknuma. In the room nearest to the main suite of rooms was a huge dressing table with a flower-patterned tile top, a colossal mirror, innumerable drawers, and cut-glass ornaments. My eyes fell on a long hairpin on the table top. Who was it who last spent a night there I was almost tempted to ask. But the walls of Falaknuma, which had ears, never spoke. No one ever revealed anything around these parts. To be tight-lipped was a necessary requisite of service in the royal household.

The grouping of rooms was the same in the other wing though they were not so elaborately furnished. Instead of cut-glass wash-basins and jugs with a ring of silver around them, the rooms on the other wing merely sported wash-basins of china. The upholstery too was not of royal yellow-gold, but of more bourgeois colours, such as purple and blue. So the attendant explained who took me around, a man in his middle forties, who volunteered the information that it was his daughter who had recently been accepted in marriage by one of the Nizam's sons. That presumably gave him a new status in the State. The position of father-in-law to one of the Nizam's sons carries with it a small *mansab* of a few hundred rupees a month. The honour is, however, rated higher than the emolument it brings.

While touches of an age gone by were still very much in evidence in Falaknuma, in sharp contrast were modern tele-

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phones installed in every room, all of ivory white. 'Are these internal telephones', I asked, 'or can you speak from here with the rest of the city?'

'The city?' came the horrified reply. 'You can speak from here to anywhere in the world.'

In the centre of the two wings came the main staircase that led to the upper floor. At the foot of it, on a base of black carara, stood Calliope, with a lamp on her head, the workmanship of Professor Pietro Lazzerini, undoubtedly an expensive sculptor in his day. She looked across the marble staircase to an imposing array of portraits on the wall. There they hung painted on canvas; the colour in their cheeks had not faded with time. There was Clive of India in his satin breeches, fancy waistcoat and tail coat; the Star of India was pinned on his left breast and a sash signifying another decoration ran across the front of his frilled shirt. He wore a wig as was the fashion of the day. Next to him were the Marquises of Hastings, Cornwallis and Wellesley; the Earls of Auckland, Minto and Dalhousie, Earl Hardinge, and Lords Bentinck and Metcalfe. It seemed as if the founders and builders of the British Empire in India had been collected by the Nizam and hung on the walls of Falaknuma.

At the top of the stairs there were other pictures. There was Salar Jung I, the builder of Hyderabad and Regent of the late Nizam, in his scarlet and gold robes; near him Falaknuma's first owner Vikhar-ul-Omara in a long dark blue coat and light grey pants, with a gold watch chain hanging from his coat pocket; then two of his ancestors, one of whom had sat for his portrait in red slippers, wearing a squat white turban and a coat of dark green trimmed with an embroidered border. All these portraits and the richly woven carpet of yellow gold brought to the staircase a wealth of colour. Two oversize blue Ali Baba jars on the landing completed the ornate picture.

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On the left of the landing was the Throne room. It had a parquet floor and looked bare except for two gold chairs at one end of it. On these, on State occasions, the visiting Viceroy and the Nizam would sit. By the side of these chairs were two pink china vases on wooden stands, and behind them were bibelots of naked Greek goddesses and a tall deep maroon china vase with huge chrysanthemums patterned over it. Two tiger skins sprawled on the wooden floor, at the foot of the golden chairs.

In later years this Throne room had sometimes been used as a ballroom, and one of the old courtiers who spoke with reverence of those days, recalled the stately scenes with all the men dressed in gorgeous full-dress uniforms or oriental *sherwanis* and a sprinkling of Englishwomen in the gay colourful crinolines and bustles of the day.

Thirty-six chandeliers lit this ornate Venetian room. Modern frescoes of still life adorned the walls. The ceiling was painted in a light blue-grey, ruled off by lines of pink and gold. In odd places long mirrors hung from the walls, giving the room even more depth than it had.

The Throne room led to a long banqueting room with one dining table and 102 ornately carved wooden chairs. The chairs were upholstered in old leather with the initials 'VO' inlaid in the head of each chair. At first I thought the initials stood for 'Very Old', as in cognac of a certain vintage. This frivolous thought was erased from my mind by the attendant, who explained that VO were the initials of the original owner, Vikhar-ul-Omat.

There were only five chandeliers in this banqueting room, which was full of innumerable sideboards and whatnots of various shapes, sizes and designs, each bearing a lamp or a bibelot from almost every country in the world and of almost every

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period. At opposite ends of the room, set in niches in the walls, were paintings of King George V and Queen Mary, painted when they were still young. On the very long banqueting table was a single centrepiece, a huge silver cup four-foot high with shikar scenes engraved around it and a shikari with a fixed bayonet on the cup lid. It was typically a man's room, with no feminine touches to relieve the furniture or the silver.

As I moved through, I came to the door at the other end which led to the card room and the billiard and smoking suites, all of which revealed the same manly influence, accentuated by oak-panelled walls, wooden ceiling and tough leather chairs studded with brass.

In the midst of all this masculinity hung a picture on the wall. In its tarnished gold frame was a buxom Indian damsel reclining on a chair in a thinking position, her right hand resting under her head. The chair was long and as I followed her curvaceous form I noticed pretty little feet which had toe-nails painted in red. Also in the picture was a shiny silver spittoon in readiness to receive her ladyship's *pan* spit. 'One of the favourites, must be', the attendant volunteered. But of whom or of which period he would not say.

Across the room facing this picture was an old-fashioned *hookah* with four comfortable leather chairs beside it at a time four men could smoke from this *hookah*, for it had four tubes connected to four separate water chambers, which made the smoking both communal and hygienic. It ensured a feeling of companionship without any risk of breathing each other's germs. The base of the *hookah* was bell-shaped and inlaid with typical North Indian filigree work, a speciality of Lucknow. It could hold five pounds of tobacco at a time. The tubes were bound with gold silk thread with tassels hanging from them.

We moved on through door after door, passing heavy drapes

of curtains, again in yellow-gold, to the long drawing-room which adjoined the staircase landing facing the entrance to the Throne room. The tapestry of this room was old, almost splitting in places, rich with age and rot. It was an unusually long room, packed to every square foot with furniture of different periods, chairs and settees of every shape, curve and size, and with innumerable glass cases which had exhibits in them which varied from museum pieces to junk. Its breakdown value would be fabulous, for some of the jades in one glass cupboard alone had been valued by the jeweller Gazdar.

In another glass case was a gold tea-set, inlaid with green enamel and studded with small diamond baguettes. There was also a silver mango tree, about three feet high, sprouting from what appeared to be a bulky silver trophy. No one knew how it had found its way into the show case, nor could anyone explain its significance to me. On another shelf were exquisite little china pieces, varying in period from the Ming to the Chang. In between stood little Medici and Dresden figures — a glorious assortment.

In another glass case, all by itself, were the four seasons of the year portrayed in ivory, the work of a Chinese craftsman. And then at the far corner of the room was an immense grand piano covered with a biege velvet cloth. On the lid of this piano, packed close to each other, were autographed portraits of those who had at some time or another visited Hyderabad as official guests of the Nizams VI and VII. All these pictures were in silver frames, some surmounted by Royal crests. There was the Duke of Windsor as Prince of Wales. His silver frame bore the Prince of Wales' feathers and the motto '*Ich Dien*'. There was the late King George V, with the Crown embossed on the silver frame. There were innumerable Viceroys whose signatures I could not easily decipher.

THE PALACE BELOW THE HEAVENS

Then on a little round table beside the piano was another cluster of photographs, some with autographs and some without. These constituted a different generation of visitors. They included His Highness the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, and Mr C. Rajagopalachari, who became the first Indian Governor-General of India on Lord Mountbatten's departure. There was Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India; the frame of his picture bore the pillar of Asoka and the lions of Sarnath, which form the emblem of the new Republic of India. These photographs also had silver frames. One solitary wooden frame stood out from all this surrounding silver. In it was a familiar Indian face, that of the iron-willed States' Minister of the first Government of India after independence, the late Sardar Patel, the man who forcibly absorbed Hyderabad into the Indian Union by what became known as the 'Police Action' of 1948. The leather-tough Sardar was significantly framed only in unpolished wood.

So time marched on, here in Falaknuma castle with an ornate MacCabe clock chiming away the minutes, the hours, the days.

We came out on to the front balcony which overlooks the courtyard and the lawn below. How still the world seemed that morning as I looked across from this vantage point at which Falaknuma was built. From here I could see the city below me — the four minarets of the Char Minar and on the left the aged dome of the Mecca Masjid. Further to the left were the Banjara Hills and in the foreground a pool of still blue water, the Mir Alam tank. In the far distant background, decipherable beyond a cluster of green trees, was the historic Golconda fort, which had stood there for centuries. These stood out on the canvas of the barren sunburnt waste, which lay below me, relieved only by occasional patches of green shrubbery.

Yet all this was but a fraction of the Nizam's domain. His dominions extended far beyond the horizon.

I turned away from the balcony to see the rest of Falaknuma, walking through endless vistas of rooms on the two floors to the well-stocked library with high bookcases lining all four sides of the room and with rows of leather-bound books showing through the glass panels. The library led to a courtyard at the back, where began two other wings of the sprawling building, which were not so easily apparent from the front. What seemed a high wall now revealed itself to be suites of rooms for the zenana.¹ A little rock garden lay in front with a little waterfall of its own and a Japanese bridge, brightly painted in red, over a pool of running water. Further away beyond the zenana were two or three huge halls which, for no apparent reason, housed a whole exhibition of South Indian, Burmese and other oriental art. The late Nizam VI, on one of his visits to Delhi, had bought up a whole exhibition which happened to be on view. As there was room in Falaknuma, he housed the exhibits there.

In a corner of the castle grounds I noticed a small solidly built structure; all on its own, somewhat incongruous because of its cemented simplicity. I asked what it was.

'Squash,' the attendant revealed. Not understanding immediately what he meant, I asked again.

'For playing game of squash,' came the explanatory reply.

This struck me as somewhat odd. Squash was a game I least associated with the Nizams of Hyderabad, but on the heels of my thought came a further explanation: 'It was built specially for the Prince of Wales'.

'But how long did he stay here?'

'Three or four days', the attendant replied. 'When Lord Lin-
1. Where the harem was housed.

lithgow came', he added, 'we had quickly to make the bed longer. He was a very tall Excellency'.

The Nizams of Hyderabad did not consider expense when playing host. When a Viceroy or a Royal guest paid an official visit to Hyderabad the preparations and alterations made at Falaknuma cost on each occasion over Rs 100,000.¹ The cost of the whole visit would be somewhere near Rs 500,000,² which was the official figure budgeted. It was quite sufficient to cover unforeseen expenses such as last-minute alterations to beds.

I roamed that morning over the vast expanse of Falaknuma, though not over all of it, for the estate was roughly 300 acres in area. It had innumerable out-houses, rows of stables and even a *feilkhana* where the elephants were kept.

The main palace was built from north to south. Gradually I walked to the southern end and stood on the balcony facing south. The south had an austere simplicity which the north aspect, with its flamboyance, did not have. I overlooked a rock range. Before me lay a vast expanse of barren earth with splashes of emerald green, which were stagnant pools of water. I could see a few narrow pathways, but all else was lost in rocks. The south lay obscured beyond, with a new civilization beginning in the land below.

My roaming completed, I turned to go home. At the palace front a car of the royal household was waiting for me. By now several attendants and servants had gathered at the main entrance to see me leave. As I entered the car they bowed low and did the salutation of the *adab*, for inasmuch as Falaknuma was the Nizam's personal estate, on its premises I was a guest of their royal lord. The head gardener then stepped forward to present me with a flower. All this was part of a grace of living which

1. £7,000.

2. £35,000.

FABULOUS MOGUL

the new rulers of India had not succeeded in burning out from the home of the Nizam of Hyderabad.

I had a last look at Falaknuma, this fabulous abode which I was leaving. If only I could place it architecturally, I said to myself. Leaning out of the car I addressed myself to the attendant who had escorted me that morning all over the rambling palace. 'I forgot to ask', I said, 'what style of architecture would you say this is?'

'Same style as Versailles', he replied.

Then we drove off.

CHAPTER EIGHT

‘Dear Sir’

FALAKNUMA was more than a palace; it was a way of life nowhere else to be found, a remnant of the splendour of the Mogul Court. The Palace itself did not matter, for there were many: Falaknuma, Chow Mahalla, Purani Haveli and King Kothi. Whichever the palace, the way of living was much the same.

While, as a concession to democracy, Nizam VII had surrounded himself with hand-picked men to run the administration of his State, he continued to live, as his ancestors had done, in another world, which was personal to him.

To that world belonged the three Paigah families. ‘Paigah’, is a lofty rank, carrying with it hereditary tenure of extensive estates. The Paigah title is peculiar to Hyderabad State. It is made of two Persian words: *pai* meant foot, *gah* meant place. Paigah, therefore, denoted an estate, whose owner had the rank and dignity of standing at the foot of the throne and, therefore, closest to the Nizam.

The Paigahs were created by Nizam III. Inasmuch as he was lord of all his dominion, he exercised his right to make large grants of land to his most trusted noblemen. In return, they undertook to maintain an army on which the Nizam could rely in time of need. A Paigah estate is much the same as feudal tenure was in medieval England. Just as the first Barons of England were liegemen of life and limb to the Kings of England, so too were the Paigah Chiefs to the Nizams of Hyderabad. The holder of the tenure was termed *Dur-e-Paigah*.

The Paigah families are all descended from Tegh Jung. His only son, Tegh Jung II, had married the daughter of Nizam II and was then given the title of Shums-ul-Omara. Of this marriage of Tegh Jung's son with the daughter of the Royal family, three sons were born: Sultan-ud-Din, Shums-ul-Omara II and Rashid-ud-Din Khan. Sultan-ud-Din died young within the lifetime of his father. Therefore the title of Shums-ul-Omara was given to the second son, who became Shums-ul-Omara II. But Sultan-ud-Din left two sons, called Asman Jah and Motehan-ud-Daula. At the same time his younger brother, Shums-ul-Omara II, who had succeeded to the title, had no offspring and he, therefore, adopted the two sons of his deceased elder brother. As successor to the title Shums-ul-Omara II's share of his father's wealth and estate was ten annas in a rupee of sixteen annas. The other surviving brother, the third of the trilogy, Rashid-ud-Din Khan, inherited the remaining six annas in the rupee. Rashid-ud-Din Khan had two sons: Khurshed Jah and Vikhar-ul-Omara.

Originally there was only one Paigah family, whose Amir or Chief was Asman Jah. Later Khurshed Jah and Vikhar-ul-Omara, who between them inherited the six-anna share of the original vast Paigah estate, were raised to the status of Paigah Chiefs. The original Paigah Chiefs were, therefore, all first cousins, tracing their descent back to the same Tegh Jung I.

There has been much dispute in recent years with regard to the status and meaning of a Paigah tenure. In a recent litigation between the new Indian Government and the Paigah Chiefs, the Government pleaded that the word 'Paigah' was derived from the 'Maharatta word *paga* meaning a cavalry stable. Thus it was contended by the Government that Paigah was a military rank and could, therefore, be withdrawn at the will of the government. The Paigah Chiefs contended, on the other

hand, that it seemed absurd that a Mahratta word would be used at that time when the language of the Court was Persian. The High Court upheld the Paigah Chiefs' contention. The Chiefs further pointed out that on the scroll of appointment, called the Sanad, it was clearly said that their *jagirs*¹ had been given to them in perpetuity, to their sons and their sons, and their sons again 'as long as the sun and moon are in rotation'.

The eyes of the present Amir-e-Paigah of the Asman Jah clan, lit up as he repeated the equivalent Persian words to me: '*Ta dore shums va khammr.*'

It was sunset as we sat on the rear verandah of his spacious house, outside the large room filled with a hundred trophies of elephants, tigers, leopards, wild boars and antelopes which he had shot. His hand gripped the huge tusks of an elephant, as if he were taking strength from the great animal to which they once belonged.

We were sipping tea in the cool of the evening, with the tall palm trees sparsely dotting the landscape. The sky was a canopy of pale blue, clear from end to end. A flock of white paddy birds streaked across it, homeward bound. The landscape, as we looked at it across his spacious acres, was of hard rock with occasional patches of green and little pools of blue water. The Amir-e-Paigah, whose personal name was Nawab Zameer Yar Jung, was sitting on a Malayan cane-chair, wearing a suit of biscuit-coloured silk, a shirt to match, with cuff-links of ruby cabouchon and a deep maroon tie. Dark-skinned, he was in his middle forties and westernised in his ways and clothes. His house is a modern though sprawling mansion, with large colonnades and high ceilings, and with expensive and rare Persian carpets on the parquet floor. The mansion is modernly furnished, but a certain ancient tradition still lingers within its walls.

1. Land tenures.

This came more forcibly to me as I wandered through the spacious rooms, on the walls of which hung the portraits of his ancestors and his cousins, an array of dignified old gentlemen who looked handsome in their colourful robes of purple and gold, wearing *dastars*¹ of varying colours. On the *dastars* and around their necks could be seen some of the family jewellery, which it was the custom of the time to wear for adornment. This wealth would be difficult to estimate; a diamond *sarpich* worn on the turban hung with rubies the size of walnuts, a broad diamond necklace with a pendant emerald, rubies strung together like a breastplate, a headdress of pearls the size of large marbles, though elongated in shape. The value of this jewellery can be estimated from an incident that recently occurred when the Customs confiscated only a few articles of jewellery belonging to the same Nawab Zaheer Yar Jung. The confiscated lot was valued at £400,000.

In almost every room I visited were large leather-bound albums of photographs which showed his grandfather, Asman Jah, and his uncles, Khurshed Jah and Vikhar-ul-Omara, in flowing robes and flowing beards, with bejewelled swords hanging by their sides — a picturesque collection of men who belonged to an age which is no more.

Each Amir-e-Paigah had his own Court around him, even as the Nizam had his. The Amir's court was, however, always on a more modest scale than that of the man who was lord of all his dominion, but over his lesser Court the Amir held equal sway. His house, which had acres of land, had always a mosque in it, for the basic principle of the Moslem way of life was devotion to God.

The shades of evening were falling fast, and in that delicate twilight hour I could see the dome of the mosque gleaming
1. Turbans.

through the trees in the garden, its golden curve lending richness to the pale grey sky.

The hierarchy was undisputed and clear. First there was God, which in a Moslem home is Allah; then there was the Nizam, and then only third came the Amir-e-Paigah. So undisputed was the Nizam's overlordship over the Paigah Chiefs that they could not leave his dominion without his express permission.

‘Do you mean,’ I asked, ‘that every time you go for a weekend to Bombay or Madras you would have to ask for permission from the Nizam?’

‘Oh yes,’ the Nawab replied. There was no shadow of doubt in his mind. ‘If I left Hyderabad even for an hour, I would take Sirkar's permission.’

‘And how do you get this permission?’ I asked.

‘I would have to write to him and send him my request by personal messenger. Sirkar would read my request, and often on the same note he would scribble his assent. Only then could I go.’

‘And what would you write?’ I asked inquisitively.

‘There is a proper form of address, which we faithfully follow in every communication we address to him, whether it is on an important matter or not. I will show you,’ he said.

He clapped his hands and a flunkey appeared in a flash, like a genie in the tales of the Arabian Nights. The Nawab addressed a few words to him, and in a few minutes the flunkey who had disappeared, returned with a single sheet of folded notepaper, on which there appeared an enormous letter-head. The writing on it was in Persian. The large crown-octavo envelope had similar Persian writing on it. The Nawab handed these to me, saying: ‘This is how we address His Exalted Highness.’

I took the notepaper in my hands. It looked no different from the design on a Persian carpet. I knew one read from right to left in that language.

FABULOUS MOGUL

The Nawab took the notepaper back into his hands, and from his pocket he took his horn-rimmed glasses and slowly read it out to me:



مُودُبَانَه عَرْضِ هَے کَہ

بَعْدَ اَازَر تَمَانِه بُوَسِی

*Bad uz Asthan Bosi Ba paish gahe Hazrath Peer-o-Murshid Jehan Panahi Zile Subhani Ala Hazrath Khadar Khudrath Huzoor Purnoor Bandagane Ali Mutha Ali Mudda Zilla Hul Ali Khalladall ahu Mulkahu Va Sultanathahu Moadubana Urz Hai Kay.*¹

It sounded like a Persian prayer, the words of which I could not understand but whose music I could hear.

‘What does it all mean?’ I asked, spellbound by the cadence of these words.

The Nawab thought for a while, then with an expressive gesture of the hand he explained: ‘It is just as you would say “Dear Sir”.’

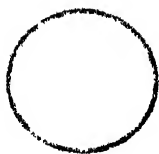
In the silence that followed the Nawab explained that there-

1. ‘After kissing the Threshold of Your Throne, it is humbly submitted to the Great and Holy Protector of the World, Shadow of God, Mighty holder of Destinies, Full of Light and Most Elevated among Creatures, the Exalted, May God’s Shadow Never Grow Less, May God Protect Your Kingdom and Your Sultanate, Most Respectfully I beg to submit . . .’

‘DEAR SIR’

after would come the request, perhaps just one line: ‘May I go to Poona for the races?’

The hot cup of tea which I was sipping made a very refreshing drink. It helped to bring my voice back from the bottom of my larynx into which it had sunk at that moment.



CHAPTER NINE

Perfumed Gazals

THIS delicately floral approach to life, characteristic of the Moguls, found importance again in the reign of Nizam VII when, in his early thirties, he turned away from Western forms of affectation such as dancing and wine-sipping to the more oriental relaxation of writing Persian poetry. Champagne and Invalid port gave way to perfumed gazals.

Classical Persian has been the language of the lush oriental poets. The artistry of emotion and skill which goes into the fashioning of Persian verses is greatly prized.

Well-bound in soft brown morocco leather and embossed with gold, is a rare volume of verses. Printed at the Government Press in 1919, this volume forever remains a first and only edition of the gazals written by Nizam VII of Hyderabad, 'freely rendered in English verse' by the scholar Nizam Jung.

Gazals are love ballads. Their theme is the expression of unrequited love. Such ballads are often, as in the present case, the outcome of an emotion engendered by the poet identifying himself with the passionates who suffer through their love unrequited by the 'Beauty' to whom the outpourings of the soul are addressed. The agony of this spurned love is suited to Persian poetry, for love fulfilled is mundane and familiar. The mark of exclamation is frequently used to express not surprise but satisfaction.

In his gazals His Exalted Highness shows a wealth of imaginative poetic emotion; he gladly dies many deaths for his various loves, suffering in every poem as the love-ravaged hero. Many

PERFUMED GAZALS

a last verse is of Osman, deep in the coils of this imagined emotion. Imagined it must be, for with four legal wives and forty-two Begums for ever waiting for a mark of his favour, he could have had little need to lament over the 'cold and cruel Beauty' who so often spurns his poetic adoration. Even so he says:

*Of cruelty and sorrow
Go ask my heart's despair!
And of my heart's fidelity
Go ask the cruel fair!*

*Nay, ask me not the reason
Why tears of blood must flow.
Ask blood-stained lids and lashes;
They must the reason know.*

*What suffering and what anguish
Her absence can impart
My lips can never tell you;
Go ask my tortured heart!*

*What savour of Love's sorrow
I bear in every vein
Go ask the thirsty dagger
That seeks my heart to drain!*

*Impelled by Love and Madness,
I wander night and day.
If you will not believe me,
Go ask the steps that stay!*

*What can I tell of Osman,
Who'll ne'er the bowl decline?
Go ask you empty goblet,
Yon brimming cup of wine!*

FABULOUS MOGUL

The traditional oriental form of love poetry is preserved by piercing the bleeding heart of the love-lorn, as in these verses:

*O hapless heart, what toils
Has Fate for thee in store,
That seeks the tangled coils
Of Beauty's e'er more?*

*What hope of Love's wounds healing?
'She will not mend but mar!
A deeper wound I'm feeling
Beside the ancient scar!*

*Each subtle mode of anguish,
Each cruel art she tries;
My tortured heart must languish
Hopeless beneath the skies!*

There are variations, as when 'My tortured heart' becomes 'O throbbing heart'. He says:

*O throbbing heart, why wilt thou not lie still
For one short while within this wearied breast?
What wild desires, what wayward fancies fill
Thine inmost core, and rob me of my rest!*

Things get a bit entangled in the following verses:

*Ah, then this throbbing heart of mine
Was riven with despair,
While round its bleeding core did twine
The meshes of thine hair!*

*And thus I know thy wanton show
Of faithlessness and wrong
Love sanctioned that my heart might grow
Through suffer'ing faith more strong!*

PERFUMED GAZALS

There are alternate patches of despondency and resignation, as judged by these verses taken from his various poems. First he says:

*Oh, the tryst my heart had longed for,
Cruel of her to deny!
Fruitless was my ardent message,
Heartless was her cold reply!*

Resignation follows in:

*Beloved, though you be cruel
My heart shall ne'er complain;
For me no pain or pleasure
Save your own joy or pain!*

As a lover he is both humble and generous. Despite his exalted position in life, he is not ashamed to admit:

*Ask not how fares my heart;
All crushed by pain it lies,
It was a tender flower,
And now it droops and dies!*

Then he shows his generosity as in:

*Faithful to thee, this heart of mine
Has turned to me untrue!
Though still within my breast, 'tis thine!
Yes, Love — 'tis all for you!*

Periodically he dies a thousand deaths for love, as when:

*Beauty's sword of charm has killed me,
And Death's self is shamed today!
With a heart consumed to ashes
Not one weak word did I say!*

FABULOUS MOGUL

*Longing still to be a martyr,
With what joy this eager heart
Rose to greet the lifted weapon,
And received the fatal dart!*

His imaginative yearnings are expressed in yet another last verse, in which once again Osman figures:

*Of the tortured heart of Osman
‘Why recount the tale again?
Oh, it is an endless story
Of Love’s yearning and Love’s pain!*

In a number of other verses taken from different poems he shows a wealth of poetic imagination in expressing emotion:

*Love’s wounds are blushing in my breast
And like a garden bloom,
My moan is like the Bulbul’s song,
(That charms the twilight gloom)!*

and

*Ah me! My heart outflows in tears;
And as the teardrops fall,
My lap is full of precious gems:
They’re pearls and rubies all!*

and

*Would that she might seek my bosom,
Soothe me with her pitying eyes!
Ah, ’tis vain, the hope to move her
With Love’s tender plaints and sighs!*

A more fatalistic note is struck in:

*I would not from my bosom
Pull out the fatal dart:
I kept it, like Love’s longing,
Deep buried in my heart.*

PERFUMED GAZALS

Sometimes he becomes aware of the time he has wasted on his amours, as when he says:

*She would not hear the story
Of yearning love and pain.
No word she let me utter;
All efforts were in vain.*

*Osman, thy life is wasted,
The precious years have flown;
And such, alas, thy practice,
No guerdon hast thou won.*

Although in most of his poems he abases himself as a lover and admits that he is not worthy of Great Love, and even worries himself over rivals for his Beauty's affections, he occasionally realizes that he, Osman, is after all not to be cast aside so lightly, and therefore sometimes manages to win out in the end:

*But, Osman, wait — she'll not be free
From love's wild throbs of pain;
And hand on heart, she'll come to thee:
Thou shalt not plead in vain!*

and

*Take comfort, Osman, in true love
Thy like she'll never see,
Though by her own bright beauty's light,
She'll search for one like thee!*

He becomes most aware of his status in the lines which read:

*Osman, such is through Love thy plight,
Though thou no rival own.
And though in sole and sovereign right
Thou sit on Deccan's throne!*

FABULOUS MOGUL

But these are rare moments. The tone of the gazals is on the whole one of suppliance and waiting. Time is no criterion to one who seeks fulfilment of the desires of the heart. This is delightfully expressed in :

*How long wilt thou indifferent thus remain,
Faithless, how long?
How long shall I for one kiss plead in vain,
Oh say, how long?*

*I die. Go ask her who can raise the dead
And life prolong,
Will she not raise me from my lowly bed?
Ask her how long?*

*Thy love doth kill me; here in dust I lie
Where sorrows throng,
Say, wilt thou heedless gaze and let me die?
Heedless how long?*

*Come, all the vernal charms of beauty bring
Yon flowers among,
How long shall bud and blossom wait for Spring.
Ah, wait how long?*

*Kind Death, release the captive nightingale
And end his song.
He flutters in the net without avail,
Ah, me how long?*

*My hand hath never touched these locks of thine,
Nor done them wrong.
How long will they disdainful twist and twine
Ah, Love, how long?*

PERFUMED GAZALS

*The light upon Love's tomb is Heart's Desire
Deathless and strong.
Blow winds of Morn, ye cannot quench its fire!
Blow ye how long?*

The suspense was killing!

'Error of Staff'

THE years rolled on and with them the mood of abandon passed. The British were quitting India and a new regime was on its way. The Princes of India were faced with the realization that soon they would be on their own.

There followed a series of assurances from the British Government and its very high representatives.

On 12th May they were told by the Cabinet Mission, appointed by the British Government, that the new India Government would not exercise the rights of a paramount power over them, such as the British had exercised in their day.

On 12th July Mr Attlee, the British Prime Minister, categorically said that the Princes would regain their independence when the treaties and agreements which bound them to the British came to an end.

On 15th July Sir Hartley Shawcross, the Attorney General, said that Britain did not intend to bring any pressure to bear upon the Princes.

On 17th July Lord Listowel, Britain's Secretary of State for India, said: 'They (the Princes) will then be entirely free to choose whether to associate with one or other of the Dominion Governments OR TO STAND ALONE and His Majesty's Government will not use the slightest pressure to influence their momentous and voluntary decision.'

All these pronouncements, solemnly made, clarified the freedom of choice which the Princes of India were to have when Britain had quit.

The Nizam was not so sure whether his treaties and agreements with the British could be ended without his consent, for he was the Party of the Second Part in the contract.

On 9th July he wrote to Lord Mountbatten who was Viceroy and Governor-General of India, that as a result of the ending of the treaties between him and the British, his State could not even form part of the British Commonwealth, unless he joined one or other of the two new dominions. In other words the ‘Faithful Ally of the British Government’ had to join India or Pakistan to remain in the Commonwealth.

‘I have been taught,’ His Exalted Highness added, ‘that I could safely rely on British arms and the British word, and I have been persuaded, in consequence, right up to the present, to refrain from increasing my army and from establishing in my State, factories for the manufacture of arms and equipment.’

On 15th July Lord Mountbatten acknowledged this note with a three-line reply. He said that he had sent a copy of the Nizam’s letter to the British Government. He hoped to let His Exalted Highness have a reply *shortly*.

Nothing happened for a month thereafter and the Nizam wrote again to Lord Mountbatten. In this letter he explained his dilemma: geographically India was his surrounding neighbour; by religion he had inalienable ties with Pakistan. What would his position be in the event of a break between the two new dominions? He therefore suggested that Hyderabad should remain neutral and not accede to either dominion. He should only have a treaty with India.

On 12th August three days before the British regime ended, Mountbatten replied to the Nizam. He gave a further assurance that in the new set-up there would be no pressure applied on the Nizam to join the new Indian dominion. Inasmuch as Lord Mountbatten was staying on as Governor-Gen-

eral of India at the invitation of the new Indian Government, to function as its constitutional head, the Nizam was justified in placing reliance on Lord Mountbatten's personal assurances.

August went into September and the Nizam addressed another letter to Lord Mountbatten. He maintained that the State of Hyderabad was fully entitled to retain its separate entity. He saw no reason why it should be merged into India. Supporting his point he said, 'Hyderabad is half the size of France and has a population of 17,000,000, more than twice as many as any other Indian State and considerably more than Canada or any other British Dominion outside India.'

The Nizam anticipated that the question might be raised whether a Moslem ruler was capable of preserving law and order over predominantly Hindu subjects. He therefore observed in the same letter, 'It (Hyderabad) has been under Moslem rule for seven centuries and under the Asaf Jah dynasty for more than two. But there has been little communal¹ strife; indeed, what there has been is negligible compared with communal discord in British India.'

Lord Mountbatten's assurances began to have only academic value when it became clear to the Nizam that the new rulers of India had made up their minds to consider or discuss nothing with him, short of accession of his State.

Consequently, Lord Mountbatten was pushed to do some tightrope walking. He had to balance between the assurances given by the British and the acquisitive intentions of the new government of India. Lord Mountbatten told the Nizam that Hyderabad had never exercised certain rights, such as deciding its foreign policy, for this had always been done by the British.

1. The word 'communal' is used in India to denote the antipathy between communities and not, as the dictionary suggests, a coming together of communities.

He glossed over the fact that the British had exercised this privilege only because of the treaties which existed between Britain and the Nizam. With the ending of these treaties the British acknowledged that the Nizam had the right to decide *all* his policies, both internal and external. Admittedly the right to decide foreign policy was not feasible. It could have led to an absurd situation; for instance, Hyderabad might have made a military pact with a foreign power with whom India was involved in war. This would make India's position untenable.

Even so, it was the British Government, which Lord Mountbatten originally represented, that gave the Nizam such a right, and it was the Government of India which the same noble Lord now headed, which was trying to take it away.

There the matter rested until April by which time the situation had worsened considerably. In India the prospect of military intervention had not only been contemplated, but arrangements were already in progress for an armoured division to undertake a planned attack on Hyderabad city.

Unaware of this, the Nizam still kept on correspondence with India's Governor-General. To Lord Mountbatten he wrote: 'You sent me assurances on several occasions that you would never be a party to any improper pressure on the State and that you had received the necessary assurances from your [Indian] Ministers. I must tell Your Excellency quite frankly that in spite of these assurances and in spite of the Standstill Agreement, economic pressure has in fact been applied on Hyderabad with growing intensity from the time when the British left. There is no matter of doubt that it is in full force to-day. Even medicines, medical stores and hospital requisites are being held up, and chlorine for the water supply of my people. Of all this my Government have in their possession documentary evidence. There are many Britishers and other

foreigners who have been in the State in recent months and can confirm what I say of their own knowledge. Nor has it been seriously challenged by the officers of your Government. I have hitherto made no public protest, but if it is now intended to create an open breach of friendly relations, I can no longer remain silent.’

‘To break faith with the weak,’ the Nizam warned, in that deeply moving letter, which was the last he wrote to Lord Mountbatten, ‘causes perhaps less immediate disadvantage than to break faith with the strong, but assuredly in the end it brings its retribution.’

The Nizam’s letter, delivered by hand of his constitutional adviser, Sir Walter Monckton, had an instant effect. Lord Mountbatten quickly replied with a twelve-paragraphed letter.

Lord Mountbatten said, ‘As you well know, I am now a constitutional Governor-General, and my official views are those of my Government.’

‘I thought, nevertheless,’ Lord Mountbatten continued, ‘that a useful purpose would be served if I were to convey to you some of my personal feelings and thoughts on the present situation. I know not only that you will treat these with the confidence which I feel you will agree they deserve, but also that you will take full account of what I have to say both as a friend of Hyderabad, as a whole, [*sic*] and as one who had personally always believed in, and will continue to believe in constitutional monarchy as the best form of government in this troubled world.’ This professed friendship for Hyderabad was a little sudden even for the Nizam to accept.

Lord Mountbatten went on to say, ‘I feel that it is my duty to set Your Exalted Highness’s mind at rest on one point. You refer to assurances, which I have given to you in the past, that I would never be a party to improper pressure on your State.

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These assurances remain as good to-day as when they were given. *Never will I, the constitutional Governor-General of India, be a party to any such procedure.*¹

The date of this letter was 8th April which is significant in terms of the preparations already secretly in progress for the invasion of Hyderabad. Indian troops marched into Hyderabad on 13th September of that same year. It was a highly mechanised military manoeuvre, planned seven whole months ahead, and it is difficult to believe that Lord Mountbatten, as the constitutional head of the Indian Government, could have been unaware of them.

Meanwhile, what happened to the reply to the Nizam's first letter of 9th July which Lord Mountbatten said he *had* forwarded to His Majesty's Government and to which he hoped to let His Exalted Highness have a reply *shortly*. Nine whole months had passed and the Nizam had received no reply. 'I have investigated this matter,' Lord Mountbatten said, 'and it appears that the reason why a further reply was not sent lay in an error of staff work in the political department here. . . .'

An error of staff work? To the man who gave over twenty-five million pounds to Britain's war effort. Rightly did Sir Arthur Lothian say in his book, 'No person of British origin who knows the facts can read the dignified and loyal statement (of the Nizam) without a feeling of shame at our tacit abandonment of Hyderabad to pressure of every sort from India. . . .'

* * * * *

Soon the situation inside Hyderabad itself became confusing for the Nizam. In the State new political forces came on the scene. The Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, an extremist Moslem organisation. Author's italics.

zation, hitherto dormant, suddenly began to gather support in the State, and its militant wing, the Razakars, led by Kasim Razvi, became increasingly popular. They became militant because of the uncertainty of Hyderabad's future independence.

It was unfortunate for the Nizam that at the time of momentous and delicate negotiations with India, he should have been surrounded by men who it now seems were unable to give him a balanced judgment. Instead, carried away by emotion, they are said to have indicated to him at the crucial stage of negotiations that as a last resort, Hyderabad could defend itself economically and militarily for a considerable length of time. This opinion appears to have been held by some of the most important officials of the State.

As the situation between the Dominion of India and Hyderabad was fast deteriorating, the Nizam had urged Lord Mountbatten to come to Hyderabad for a personal meeting. At such a personal meeting, the Nizam hoped, many points could be clarified.

But Lord Mountbatten was too busy. Having solved the bigger problem of creating the two new Dominions, Lord Mountbatten seems to have preferred to rest on his laurels rather than take upon himself the fresh headache which Hyderabad appeared to be. Lord Mountbatten answered the Nizam's request in the hour of his greatest need by sending Mr Alan Campbell-Johnson, his Press Attaché, to call on His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad, Faithful Ally of the British Government.

Lord Mountbatten departed from India on 21st June 1948, ostensibly in a blaze of glory with little Indian children sitting on his knee in the car which drove him in State from Viceroy's House to the airport. At the time this was said to be indicative of the great trust which the Indian people had decided to put

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overnight in the representative of the British Government.

But on the Nizam of Hyderabad, who had had close dealings with him, Mountbatten must have left an entirely different impression.

'Operation Polo'

IT was called 'Operation Polo', for it was just a game for the Indian Army. Army Headquarters gave it that name.

It was discussed as far back as early February when the General Staff at Army Headquarters considered the question of 'military intervention in Hyderabad', if so ordered by the Government of India. 'Military intervention' was always the term used in Army HQ. The politicians referred to it as 'Police Action'.

The GOC-in-C Southern Command, then Lt-General Sir E. N. Goddard, was duly informed, and a directive was sent to him to prepare a plan for Hyderabad's occupation. He was given a choice of HQ1 Armoured Div. or HQ5 Inf. Div. General Goddard selected the former. He was therefore allotted:

one Armoured Brigade which included the Poona Horse,
the 3rd Cavalry and the 9th Battalion of the 17th Dogra
Regiment;

the 7th Infantry Brigade, consisting of three infantry
battalions;

the 9th Infantry Brigade, also consisting of three infantry
battalions;

three independent infantry battalions;

three regiments of Field Artillery, including one anti-tank
regiment.

In addition there was one troop of the 18th Cavalry and the normal complement of service corps and maintenance troops.

By the middle of March Southern Command prepared

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its plan and submitted it to Delhi for approval. At this stage a two-pronged attack on Hyderabad was envisaged with the main force moving along the main Sholapur road, a distance of about 186 miles from the objective and a smaller force moving on the Bezwada road, about 160 miles from Hyderabad.

There was, due to the operations in Kashmir, a certain shortage of supporting arms, such as Signals and Engineers. These were quickly got together, their training being given the highest priority.

By the middle of April the H'Qr Armoured Div, with one Armoured Brigade was hurriedly moved to Southern Command. Major-General J. N. Chaudhuri was given command of the Division and Brigadier S. D. Verma was made Commander of the Armoured Brigade soon thereafter. 9th Infantry Brigade was also moved from Ranchi to Bangalore in April.

The Indian troops were then almost ready to close in, but in the same month Lord Mountbatten was still assuring the Nizam:

I can now once more assure you that to the best of my knowledge and belief, Pandit Nehru and the other Ministers of the Central Government of India have in no way been parties to any policy of applying economic pressure on Hyderabad. I do not know whether you have ever met Pandit Nehru; if you had, I do not believe that you would allow any accusation of the nature you imply to be levelled against him.¹

Lord Mountbatten was quite right. Economic pressure was not contemplated by Pandit Nehru, for the Pandit was busy making preparations to turn on military pressure.

Southern Command began to take 'Operation Polo' more

seriously when the estimate of the Razakars, who were Hyderabad irregulars, was given to them as 200,000. Both soldiers and politicians of India appear to have put a high premium on the exuberance of the Razakar leader, Kasim Razvi, who was reported to have said that he and his men would plant the Asaf Jah flag on the Red Fort in Delhi, that the waters of the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea would lap the feet of the Nizam, and that Hyderabad would overthrow India!

That he did make such extravagant boasts there is no doubt; that the Indian Army, with its record in World War II, should have taken him seriously was incredible. They could, had they so wished, have dismissed them as so much Persian poetry, but the new Indian Government was, it now seems, a little anxious to put up a grand display of force for the benefit of the newly liberated citizens of India, especially as there was not much danger involved in the exercise.

So the months of May, June, July and August passed, and then came September in which both the plan and the training for 'Operation Polo' were complete. Southern Command now made their appreciation of the strength, dispositions and plans of the Hyderabad Armed Forces. They gathered that under Hyderabad General, El Edroos, there were 22,000 troops in the regular army armed with modern weapons including eight 25-pounder guns and three regiments of armoured cars. Irregular troops were estimated at 10,000 of whom only a quarter would be armed with modern small arms and the remainder with muzzle-loaders. There was a further estimate of 10,000 armed Arabs and Paigah forces, armed somewhat like the irregulars, 10,000 Police and Customs forces, who would have rifles and sten guns only, and then an unknown quantity of Razakars estimated at 200,000, carrying a variety of arms which ranged from modern small arms to spears and swords!

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This was the official Indian Army estimate, which surprisingly ignored the polo sticks which the Hyderabadis undoubtedly held in reserve.

To this estimate was added that of a high British official who, with his special knowledge of military affairs, left behind his high evaluation of the Hyderabad general, El Edroos, whom he is said to have rated as one of the best generals in India. This opinion was with due respect, passed on to Army Headquarters and Southern Command as top secret.

All was set for the first shot to be fired. The story goes that on the eve of the decision of the Indian Government to march its troops into Hyderabad, Lord Mountbatten, now in England, wrote a personal note to Pandit Nehru which began with the words: ‘As you are one of the three greatest statesmen living today . . .’ Nehru, edified with that fullsome praise is said to have gone with Mountbatten’s letter in his pocket, to the leather-tough Sardar Patel, Minister for the States, to ask if, in view of Mountbatten’s letter, the decision to invade Hyderabad could not be reconsidered. The Sardar is said to have dismissed the request for reconsideration with a wave of his hand, pointing out that it was agreed between him and Pandit Nehru that they would not interfere in each other’s business. The States were solely the responsibility of the Sardar.

There can be no historical confirmation of this incident nor, if the story is true, of the identity of the third ‘greatest statesman living’. The first was obviously Churchill. The second was intended to be Nehru. But who was the third?

Nevertheless, with armour which far outstripped the Hyderabadis’ both in quantity and quality, after several exercises performed in the months that preceded it, the Indian Army named D-day as 13th September the day on which Mr Jinnah, who founded the Moslem State of Pakistan, died. By now it

had become a three-pronged attack and the 25,000 Indians who rattled along the Sholapur and Bezwada roads with about 170 Sherman tanks, had their work meticulously apportioned. There was to be a Strike Force, a Smash Force, a Kill Force, a Vir Force and of course there was to be a Rear Div. Force, 'for the static protection of Rear Div. and the protection of administrative echelons on the move'. After all, democracy had to be taken on a gun carriage into the backward State of Hyderabad.

The first point of contact between the Indian Army and the Hyderabad forces was at Naldurg, where even the bridge was found intact as a result of the defence strategy of the General rated as one of the best in India. At the end of the day's fighting India's casualties totalled 7 killed and 9 wounded, of which one died later. Those of the enemy were estimated at 632 killed and 14 wounded. In addition some 200 of the enemy were captured.

That was the only real skirmish of any consequence, after which the operation really became the game of polo by which name it was called. There was a little mopping up to be done in the next few days, which resulted in another 250 Hyderabadis killed from the irregular and regular armies; India's corresponding figure being 11. And by the end of D-plus 4 days, the brief war was over. The Indian general who succeeded General Goddard as GOC-in-C of Southern Command, Lt-General Maharaj Shri Rajendrasinhji, DSO, broadcast a surrender ultimatum to Major-General El Edroos, demanding of him, in the interests of humanity and to save unnecessary and useless loss of life, to lay down arms.

This message seems never to have reached the Hyderabad general, but at 17.00 hours the same day, Hyderabad radio had announced the surrender of the Hyderabad Army.

The formal surrender took place the next day. It was originally expected by the Indian Army that the formal surrender

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would be a Movietone Special with the Nizam's heir apparent, the Prince of Berar, and India's Agent General in Hyderabad, the non-violent, Gandhi-capped Mr K. M. Munshi being present at the surrender ceremony. But there appear to have been some last minute changes in these arrangements. Perhaps the Gandhi cap, symbol of peace and non-violence, was considered a little out of place in proceedings which involved a 'strike force', a 'smash force', and a 'kill force'. Whatever the reason, only Major-General El Edroos, with one aide, was present to surrender his Army when the Indian General Chaudhuri got out of his jeep and walked towards the waiting Hyderabad general.

Major-General Chaudhuri said: 'I have been ordered by Lt-General Maharaj Shri Rajendrasinhji GOC-in-C, Southern Command, to take the surrender of your Army.'

General El Edroos replied in a low voice, 'You have it'.

General Chaudhuri then said, 'You understand that this surrender is unconditional', And General El Edroos answered, 'Yes, I understand'.

'You understand', General Chaudhuri went on to say, 'that you and all your troops of the Hyderabad Army now come under my command by virtue of the powers vested in me by the GOC-in-C Southern Command.' And once again General El Edroos replied: 'Yes'.

Then with characteristic sportsmanship the victor pulled out his cigarette case and offered a smoke to the captain of the losing side who took the cigarette offered and lit it with a Ronson lighter. The polo game was over.

Congratulations were flashed over telegraph wires from all over the country to the victorious Indian Army in Hyderabad. A change of outlook was noticeable in Indians, for when famous Indian Divisions returned home after World War II,

after making history at Keren, Tobruk, Benghazi, Cassino, Mandalay, Imphal and Burma, and drenching the battlefields of Europe and Asia with their blood, the same men who were flashing telegrams now had dismissed the Indian fighting men as 'rice soldiers'. But after 'Operation Polo', even non-violent Congressmen,¹ were claiming them back as 'gallant warriors in the war of liberation of humanity'.

A Military Governor, backed by a proclamation of martial law, was installed in Hyderabad. The Nizam's Cabinet was disbanded. The Razakar leader Kasim Razvi and Hyderabad's Prime Minister Mir Laik Ali were interned, while the citizens of Hyderabad waited behind the bolted doors of their modest abodes for the new régime to begin.

"The action was swift and bold", reads the official record of the Government of India. 'In five days Hyderabad was freed from the clutches of the Razakars and the Nizam was restored to liberty of action. He decided to accede to India.'²

'Without any pressure', it should have added, to keep the record accurate.

In far away Lake Success, the Argentinian delegate, Dr Jose Arce, did not see the obvious glory of it all. He kept saying to the UN Security Council, 'The march of the Indian troops towards the capital of Hyderabad reminds me of the march of Italian troops towards the Abyssinian capital'.

But, said Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, now shaking their heads in unison, the babbling Argentinian was not competent to judge.

Other leaders, of the non-violent Congress party now in power in India, rushed to the radio to eulogize what they

1. Members of the Congress Party in India.

2. *Since Independence*, The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, p. 30.

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termed the 'Police Action' in Hyderabad. But even they were hard put to explain to the applauding Indians why the Government of India had to use one Lieutenant-General, three Major-Generals and a whole Armoured Division to effect a 'Police Action' which normally connoted a *lathi*¹ charge conducted by an Inspector of Police.

'Military intervention' was understandable in terms of internal security. But calling it a glorious victory at home and an innocuous police action abroad was a trifle confusing.

1. Bamboo stick carried by policemen with which miscreants are often belaboured.

Wagons of Gold

THE proclamation of martial law in Hyderabad, following the Police Action, brought back memories of the British *raj*.¹ The pious, non-violent disciples of Gandhi, were a trifle embarrassed at being caught applauding a military action within a few months of their apostle's death.

Holy water had, therefore, quickly to be sprinkled over Hyderabad. The impression of 'liberation' had to be kept up. The Nizam was therefore called upon to become the *Raj-pramukh*² of Hyderabad, an honour which he had no option but to accept.

The old order was changing, yielding place to new. Gone was the Mogul Court and the noblemen who belonged to it. In their place came a new breed of men, clad in home-spun khaddar and wearing crisp white Gandhi caps, symbolic of the pure regime they were to usher in. To complete the holy picture, a *swami*³ was called upon to form the new Hyderabad government, and for a moment it looked as if manna would really fall from the heavens.

It never did.

As time went on, it became more and more apparent that the people of Hyderabad preferred the slow but steadily progressive regime of the old-fashioned Nizam to the new jerky administration which sprouted up in the wake of 'liberation'.

1. Regime or rule.
2. Constitutional head.
3. Holy man.

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The Nizam with all his despotic ideas had been like a father to them. The respect they paid to him was instinctive. The people were accustomed to some of his queer, almost despotic ways. They did not seem to resent that when he drove along main thoroughfares of the city the roads had to be completely cleared until his car had passed by, and that pedestrians had to duck into nearby alcoves or shop entrances until His Exalted Highness had passed. What was more, to show that he was above the law, he habitually drove on the wrong side of the road and ignored 'Keep Left' signs on traffic islands.

On one occasion a little lamb ignored the royal *firman* and dashed into his car, badly injuring itself. The Nizam ordered his convoy of limousines to be stopped, picked up the lamb and turned back to the palace. There he summoned the Royal Veterinary Surgeon and supervised the treatment given. After two or three weeks the lamb recovered fully, but then its owner could not be found. The Nizam, therefore, appointed himself guardian of the lamb. He became very attached to it, fed it himself, and never let it out of sight. It was with him for nearly ten years — until it died.

His people had seen him on another occasion saving the man who had made an attempt on his life. It was the evening of 4th December the twentieth day of the Moslem month of mourning, Moharram, when he was driving out to attend a religious festival at Tar-Band, and a hand-grenade was thrown at his car. The incident occurred only a few furlongs from his palace. The attempt was foiled and the assailant was in danger of being lynched by the people who rushed out into the street. The Nizam feared that the angry mob would tear the man to pieces. From his car he shouted to the people to desist and to hand the assailant over to the police instead. He waited and saw to it that the man was safe, in police custody.

Then he sat down in his car and asked to be driven to the festival.

He was not one bit shaken. When his courtiers urged him to turn back and not to proceed any further that day he said, '*Dushman agar khawi'st Nigheban khawister ast*', which was just the Persian way of saying, 'If the enemy is strong, the Protector is stronger still'.

His people had seen him walking in a funeral procession, lending his shoulder to the bier as is the Moslem custom. He could behave as an ordinary man without losing his dignity. He could exact discipline and show compassion with equal ease, for the people obeyed him out of respect, not out of fear. No army of occupation could do the same.

It therefore became quite clear to the Government of India that it would be more politic to govern the conquered State of Hyderabad through the Nizam, whom the people knew and trusted, rather than attempt to administer it through new administrators whom the people were likely to resent.

A new relationship was therefore established, the way for which was paved by a letter written by the Military Governor to the Nizam.¹ The proposals made in this and subsequent letters were later incorporated into a formal agreement between the Indian Union and the State of Hyderabad on the one hand, and the Nizam of Hyderabad on the other.

The Military Governor was most considerate. He urged the Nizam to accept the proposals, for this would 'enhance His Exalted Highness's reputation within the State, in India and in international opinion'.

The Governor also urged upon the Nizam to lend money to the State from any reserves that he may have, again 'for the enhancement of HEH's reputation within the State'.

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When the enhancement of his reputation abroad was brought up for the third time, the Nizam caustically remarked: 'Why do they want always to push my reputation up!'

The seemingly considerate Military Governor was the same Lt-General J. N. Chaudhuri who had pushed the Armoured Division into Hyderabad.

* * * * *

The Agreement guaranteed to the Nizam all the personal privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by him within or outside the territories of the State immediately before the day of Indian Independence.¹

He was guaranteed an annual Privy Purse of Rs 5,000,000² free of taxes. A further sum of Rs 2,500,000³ was guaranteed to be paid to him every year for the upkeep of his palaces, and another Rs 2,500,000 annually in lieu of income hitherto received from *Sarf-e-khas* estates, the Crown lands which with Police Action were 'merged' into the State.

There was an additional annual payment of Rs 2,500,000 guaranteed by way of Civil List for the two Princes, two Princesses, two grandsons and the brother of His Exalted Highness.⁴

An annual payment of Rs 12,500,000⁵ was solemnly guaranteed by the Military Governor who was acting under instructions of the Indian Government.

Four years later Mr Nehru wrote a personal letter to the Nizam which began with the ominous words 'Dear Friend'. The superstition is that each letter from Mr Nehru which begins with the words 'Dear Friend' costs the Nizam a tidy

1. i.e. 15th August

2. £350,000.

3. £175,000.

4. Sahebzada Basalat Jah.

5. A little less than £1,000,000.

fortune. Friendship with India's Prime Minister is a 'most expensive business', the Nizam once remarked.

In his letter Mr Nehru pointed out to His Exalted Highness, as he did to a hundred other Princes of India, that the privy purse of the Princes had become 'anachronisms' in the context of India's economy. His 'Dear Friends' should therefore accept a voluntary cut.

The Nizam replied – always with due respect – that he failed to see how what was a solemn agreement could become an anachronism. To this Nehru had no reply.

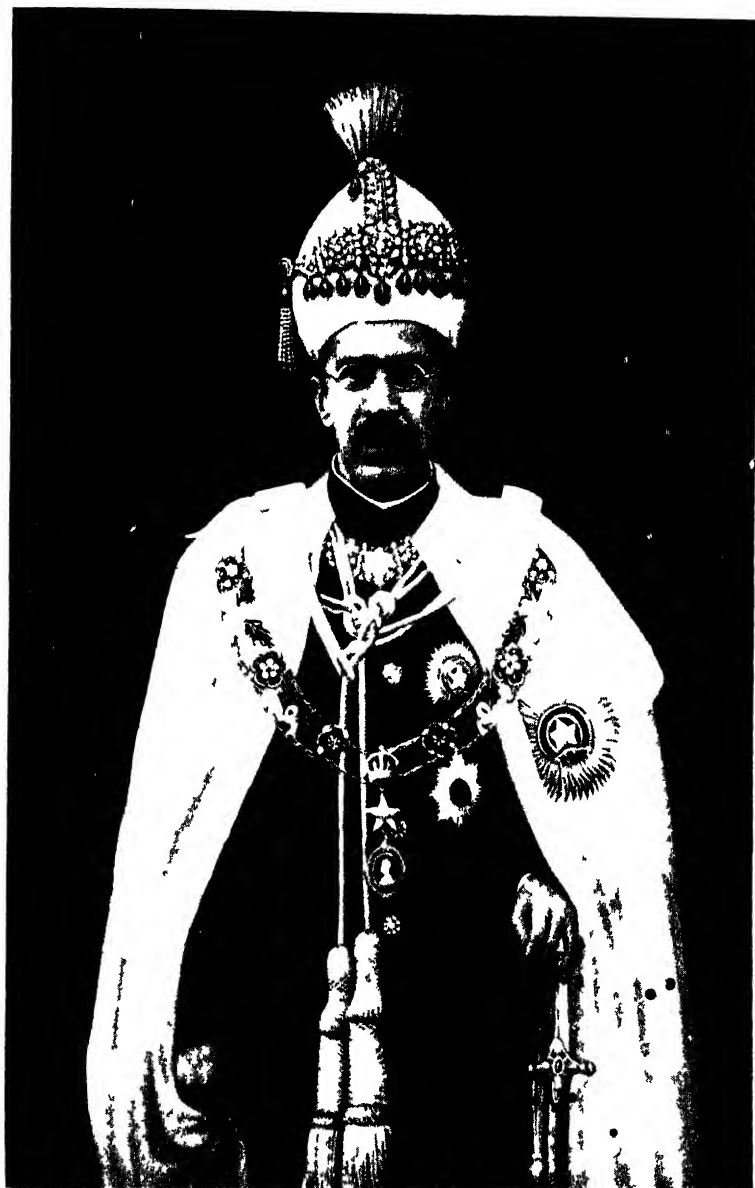
With regard to the Rs 2,500,000¹ paid annually to the Nizam in lieu of his former income from the *Sarf-e-khas* estates, the Financial Adviser to HEH in his ponderous financial prose said:

It would be interesting to ascertain to what extent this compensation was fair and reasonable. As it happens the private estates and properties comprised in the *Sarf-e-khas* used, prior to their merger in the *Diwani*, to yield a nett surplus, after deducting the expenses of the administration . . . of nearly Rs 12,400,000² per annum. The sum of Rs 2,500,000 thus represents only a fifth of what was due to the Nizam. No compensation in cash or bonds worth the name was ever offered to the Nizam for the surrender of these rich and vast properties. Both the Constitution of the Indian Union, which provides for reasonable compensation, and the Jagir Abolition Regulation of the Hyderabad State provide standards which could well have been applied. Under the provisions of the Hyderabad Jagir Abolition Regulation the purchase price to be paid by way of compensation would have been the equivalent of ten years' income. With a yearly net income of Rs 12,400,000, the compensation for the *Sarf-e-khas* would therefore have amounted to Rs 122,500,000.³ Even if that amount

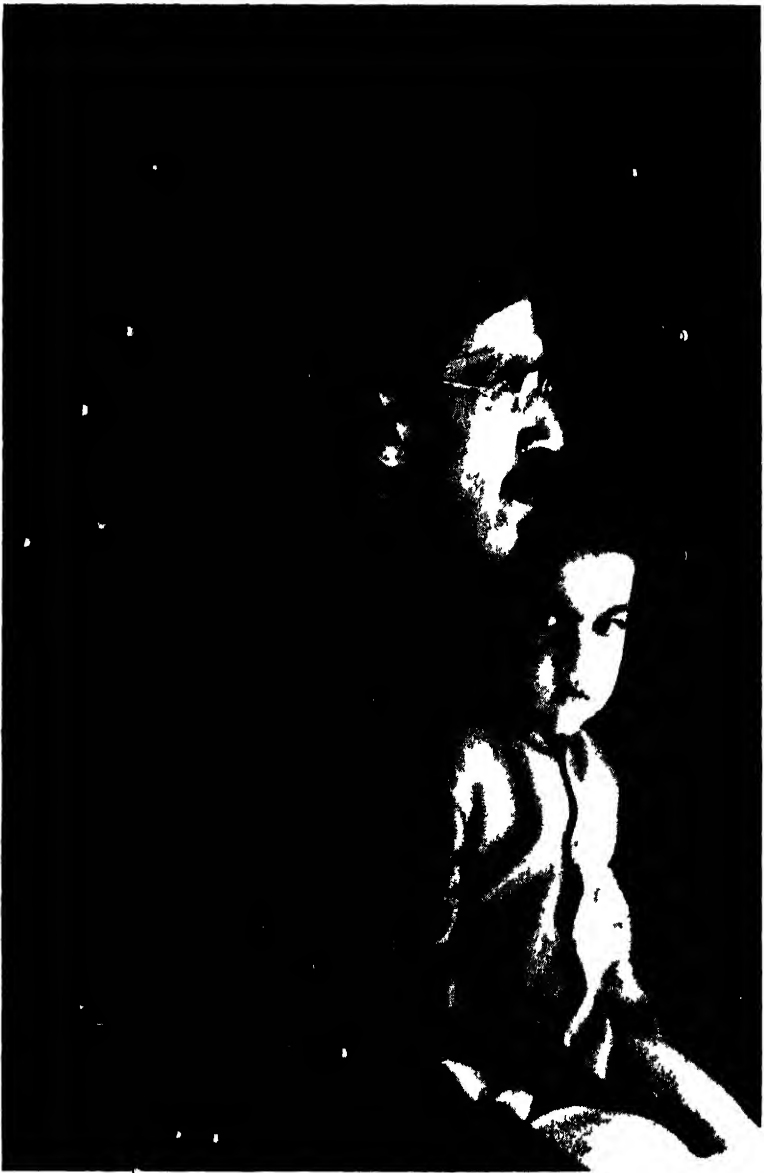
1. £175,000.

2. Just under £1,000,000.

3. Just under £10,000,000.



Nizam VII wearing his royal robes and the *Shamsheer Mirassa Kallan* the large sword studded with precious stones which is valued at approximately £200,000



HEH Nizam VII and his grandson, Prince Mukarram Jah, the eldest son of HH the Prince of Berar, watching a parade from the Fatch Medun Pavilion

had not been paid all at once, but had been spread over twenty equal annual instalments, the annual compensation to the Nizam would have been something like Rs 6,250,000¹ for twenty years and not Rs 2,500,000 for his lifetime alone.

What is more amazing, is that the State, having taken over these assets and properties, did not, however, take over the obligations that had hitherto been charged upon these assets and properties. Out of his income the Nizam had been maintaining not only his own family but a large number of other dependents, including the former dependents and servants of his predecessors. Such dependents now number over 14,000 and include many widows, orphans, scheduled² women and other helpless persons.³

Even though the Nizam has felt the loss of a crore of rupees from the *Sarf-e-khas* he has not relinquished his guardianship of these dependents. 'They are human beings whom he cannot write off', the Financial Adviser said.

He then revealed that the promised annual payment of Rs 2,500,000 to the two Princes, two Princesses, the two grandsons and the Nizam's brother 'had never been made'.

Perhaps this was because on second thoughts the Indian Government did not consider the payment necessary for the enhancement of the Nizam's prestige at home or abroad.

In view of the uncertainty which faced his family, his heirs and dependents and such charitable causes as he wished to safeguard during and after his lifetime, the Nizam decided to liquidate part of his wealth and transform it into a series of Trusts which would achieve this object.

To date he has created thirty-three such trusts. Heading them

1. £500,000.

2. Belonging to the untouchable or scheduled classes.

3. *Ruler to Rajpramukh*, published by the Financial Adviser to H.E.H. the Nizam.

are the trusts for his two sons, Prince Azam Jah (Prince of Berar) and Prince Muazzam Jah, each for the sum of Rs 18,200,000.¹

The trusts for the two Princesses are of Rs 3,000,000² each. His two grandsons, Prince Mukarram Jah and Prince Mufakkam Jah, sons of the Prince of Berar, have a joint trust of Rs 21,200,000³ in their favour.

The Nizam's brother, Sahebzada Basalat Jah has Rs 5,000,000⁴ in trust for him. This is followed by a general family⁵ trust which amounts to Rs 100,000,000⁶ approximately. There is the 'HEH the Nizam's Housing Accommodation Trust' for approximately Rs 50,000,000⁶ and the 'HEH the Nizam's Religious Endowment Trust' for Rs 4,500,000.⁷

Trust No 12 is called the 'HEH The Nizam's Stepdaughters Trusts'. For these good ladies he set aside only Rs 600,000.⁸

The next trust, 'HEH The Nizam's Sacred Relics Trust' is not in cash as the name itself suggests. Further, to ensure that there would be enough money in the dynasty for pilgrimages to holy shrines, the Nizam has set aside the 'Pilgrimage Money Trust' for Rs 2,200,000.⁹

Trust No 15 is called the 'HEH The Nizam's Family Pocket Money Trust'. Being only for pocket money, it is only for Rs 5,500,000.¹⁰

1. £1,300,000.
2. £228,000.
3. £1,400,000.
4. £350,000.
5. £7,000,000.
6. £3,500,000.
7. £330,000.
8. £40,000.
9. £160,000.
10. £400,000.

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A poet himself, the Nizam set aside Rs 125,000¹ in trust for the publication and sale of his Urdu and Persian poems.

Trust No 17 for Rs 1,000,000² is known as the 'HEH The Nizam's Jewellery Trust', in order to keep the jewels in repair.

Next come the Mader-e-Deccan Memorial Trust, the Azakhana Zehra Trust, the Bibi-ka-Alam and the Koh-e-Moula Trust totalling Rs 900,000³ between them. Trust No 21 is 'HEH The Nizam's Grandsons' Pocket Money Trust' for Rs 215,000,⁴ enough for the youngsters to have their ice-cream and cakes without having to obtain the sanction of the Government of India. This is followed by two trusts for the wedding gifts of his two grandsons and his two grand-daughters, the boys getting only Rs 15,000,⁵ the girls having Rs 325,000⁶ reserved for them. The girls are better provided for because the grandsons will be well off in their own right.

The remaining ten trusts are:

'HEH The Nizam's Jewellery for Family Trust', Rs 25,000⁷;
'The Supplementary Religious Endowment Trust', Rs 8,000,000;⁸

'The Supplementary Sacred Relics Trust', which has more relics in it but no cash;

a Supplementary Family Trust for Rs 600,000⁹;

a further Jewellery Trust for Rs 200,000;¹⁰

1. £10,000.
2. £80,000.
3. £65,000.
4. £15,000.
5. £1,200.
6. £25,000.
7. £2,000.
8. £600,000.
9. £40,000.
10. £14,000.

a second trust for his son Prince Muazzam Jah which has jewellery in it;

the Sahebzadi Anwar Begum Trust, Rs 400,000¹;

the Sahebzadi Anwar Begum Mehr Trust, Rs 100,000²;

the Sahebzadi Oolia Kulsum Trust, Rs 300,000³; *

and finally the *Sarf-e-khas* Charity Trust for Rs 50,000,000.⁴

The cash trusts together total Rs 293,605,000.⁵ The jewels and sacred relics involved in the other trusts are in addition to this.

The cash trusts were created out of the proceeds of the sale of gold which had been lying idle around the palace. Some of it was packed in trunks which had remained unopened for several years. The gold was partly in the form of bars and partly in sovereigns which had been presented to him as *nazar* during his reign. The gold bars came into his hands when there was a shortage of silver in India. Currency notes were not in circulation then. Payment of the Privy Purse had to be in silver rupees only. The Nizam had to be paid Rs 5,000,000 each year and in view of the shortage of silver, Sir Reginald Glancey, who handled the financial affairs of the Hyderabad State, offered to pay him in gold. This was done for two years, the price of gold at that time being Rs 21 per tola⁶ and the price of a sovereign a little over Rs 13, the equivalent of twenty shillings sterling.

The gold was all over King Kothi. It was even under the portico of the palace, packed in covered wagons, the wheels of which had sunk into the ground by the sheer weight of the gold stored inside. The whole palace knew what these wagons

1. £28,000.

2. £7,000.

3. £21,000.

4. £3,500,000.

5. £20,000,000.

6. 2½ tola equal one ounce.

WAGONS OF GOLD

contained, yet they had lain there for years under the portico, without fear of being stolen. The very presence of the Nizam in King Kothi gave the gold all the protection it needed.

When it was decided that the gold should be sold his trusted Financial Adviser was sent for. Collected, counted and weighed, the gold was to be taken to Bombay under special armed escort, there to be converted into cash.

The question arose of how this large quantity of gold should be carried from Hyderabad to the bullion markets of Bombay. 'Operation Gold' necessitated His Exalted Highness' personal supervision.

The Financial Adviser suggested using the special steel remittance boxes normally used by the State Bank.

'No, no, no', the Nizam said, 'I'll give you better ones. You must put it in *strong* trunks. I will give them to you. And I will give you special Allwyn English locks.' He still regarded everything British as solid and safe.

The idea, once enunciated by him, had quickly to be translated into action. Palace attendants were immediately summoned and commanded to bring down the 'special' trunks the existence of which the Nizam alone was aware.

When the trunks arrived they looked no different from ordinary trunks costing no more than fifteen shillings apiece. But no one dare question the advisability of carrying gold worth millions of pounds in trunks worth a few shillings. An order once given was not to be questioned, nor was it likely to be countermanded by HEH himself.

So the gold bars and the sovereigns were carefully packed into the trunks. They were further secured with the Allwyn locks, costing five shillings each.

On the appointed day the trunks were loaded on to a special railway wagon. Double shifts of armed escorts kept day and

night vigil over the gold. All along the route from Hyderabad to Bombay the high official had to get out of his compartment at wayside stations during the night to see if the gold in his charge was still safe in the van. A sleepless night was but natural in view of the responsibility involved.

At Bombay the gold was unloaded and taken to a bank, in the vaults of which it was safely deposited. In the next few days its sale was effected, delivery given against payment, accounts made and the high official flew back to Hyderabad, a much relieved man. The average price the gold had fetched was Rs 115 3 annas, which was over five times the price at which the Nizam had acquired it.

On descending from the plane the official hurried to the palace to present himself to His Exalted Highness. He carried a complete account of the transaction in his hand.

This large sheet of paper was put before His Exalted Highness. On it appeared the quantity of gold taken and sold, its weight, the price at which various sales had been effected. The proceeds of this one transaction were roughly Rs 60,000,000.¹

His Exalted Highness squinted impatiently at the piece of paper..

'What is all this?' he asked.

'This is the account of the sale of the gold in Bombay, Your Exalted Highness', the high official replied.

'Why? why?' HEH agitatedly asked. 'What is wrong?'

'Nothing, Your Exalted Highness'.

'Then what are you bothering me with details? You know better,' the Nizam rebuked him. It was an expression of confidence which any official, however high, would be proud to have. The high official, however, remarked that it was his duty to present the accounts of the transaction. Without even

1. £4,400,000.

glancing at the accounts of the Rs 60,000,000 transaction, the Nizam returned the paper to his official with his initials on it. The transaction thus received His Exalted Highness's formal approval.

The high official bowed and was retiring from the Nizam's presence, but before he had reached the door he was called back again. A thought had crossed His Exalted Highness's mind.

'What about my trunks?' anxiously asked the fabulous Mogul.

'Trunks?' asked the stunned official.

'My trunks', repeated the richest man in the world. 'And my English-made Allwyn locks?'

'Yes, Your Exalted Highness', stuttered the high official, 'They are being properly cleaned before being put back in the palace.'

'Ah! Then that is all right', the Nizam said with much relief.

A few days later a hurriedly-shipped consignment of empty trunks arrived by air from Bombay. Even the shippers were puzzled to see fifteen-shilling trunks, completely empty, being accorded the honour of being sent by air. On arrival in Hyderabad they were properly cleaned and, with their Allwyn locks and keys, put safely back into the various corners of the palace.

The Nizam was happy that his precious English locks were back. He did not remember that the Allwyn locks of whose English manufacture he was so proud were now being made in a corner of Hyderabad, only six miles away from King Kothi, by a Company of which he was the controlling shareholder.

Conferences and Cooks

IN his new rôle of Rajpramukh of Hyderabad, the Nizam attended the Governors and Rajpramukhs conference at New Delhi in March. Conservative by habit and very reluctant to leave his Dominions – he has never been out of India – he had to be persuaded to attend this important conference.

As soon as his decision to attend was conveyed to his officials, the palace was galvanized into action. As the visit was to be a brief one, His Exalted Highness decided to take only a small entourage with him, just 400 people. Most of these were sent ahead by train, while he himself, with a few family members and personal advisers, went to the capital in a specially chartered plane.

Innumerable items of protocol and procedure had to be thought of by the Government of India, for Rajpramukhs were of very recent creation and there was not much to go on in the way of precedent. It was realized by someone in Delhi that as HEH the Nizam was the most recent of the Rajpramukhs, his order of precedence would be exactly last at that conference and at the functions held in connection with it. For instance, at the State Banquet which would be given in honour of the Governors and Rajpramukhs by the President of India, the Nizam would, by virtue of his recent appointment to this office, have to sit somewhere at the bottom end of the table. This, as even the officials of the new State of India realized, would be quite ridiculous, having in mind the unique position which, His

Exalted Highness had held in this country prior to the new regime, and also in view of his age and bearing.

However, as no way had by then been found to tide over this delicate situation, one of the Nizam's officials thought it his duty to acquaint HEH with the situation which was likely to arise in the capital. The Nizam glared at the unfortunate official and after a moment's thought, snapped out, 'I am *not* going'.

This was virtually a crisis in the history of India and the long-distance telephone between Hyderabad and New Delhi hummed for the next few hours.

Soon the best brains of New Delhi were set to work on the problem of how to re-seat the assembly within the rules of the new protocol and yet without giving any offence to the senior-most Indian Prince.

It was the Secretary to the President, a brilliant member of the Indian Judicial Service, whose brain produced the simple yet brilliant idea that the seating should be circular and the order of precedence should be anti-clockwise. Thus on the President's right came the Prime Minister of India, then the members of the Cabinet, then the Governors and, continuing the anti-clockwise formation, came the Rajpramukhs. Thus the Nizam as the junior-most Rajpramukh came automatically on the President's left. This order of seating was used both for the conference as well as the official functions of the Conference. In view of this the Nizam was persuaded to reconsider his decision of not attending the conference which, with a benevolent smile, he did.

In New Delhi the Nizam of course resided in his own palace. With amazing adaptability he quickly took in the changes which the Capital had evidenced since the British Viceroys had departed and the first Indian President and Prime Minister came in. Occasionally he found himself a little out of gear in

the new surroundings. For instance it was after much discussion and consultation with his closest advisers that he decided to wear his official headgear, the *dastar*, at the conference. When he arrived at the conference he noticed an air of informality which made his *dastar* a trifle too formal for the occasion. He did not bat an eyelid however, and sat through the proceedings with all the dignity at his command. But when he returned to the palace late that afternoon, he confided in one of his officials, 'I looked so silly wearing it'.

He was horrified, too, that to the Prime Minister's lunch two Indian Princes, the Maharajas of Baroda and Jaipur, had come 'even without a turban on their heads'. An Indian turban is looked upon as an outward mark of respect, a formality which has been regarded as obligatory in orthodox India.

The Nizam remembered the days when he used to attend functions at which the Viceroy would be present. 'You know', he told his close circle of courtiers, as an observation on the regimes past and present, 'in those days even if there was a fly on my nose I would not dare to knock it off when the Viceroy was speaking'. With sadness in his voice he lamented, 'There are no manners now'.

At lunch he merely nibbled at the food, which he evidently did not relish. He much prefers what he calls 'a proper meal at home'.

Later that evening he had to attend the State banquet given by the President of India. About an hour before he was due to leave the palace for this function, his surrounding courtiers went into a huddle to consider which among them should draw his attention to the fact that the white pyjamas which he wore with his *sherwani* were a trifle creased and that he might, in view of the President's banquet, consider putting on a fresh pair.

Aware of the fact that His Exalted Highness was likely to resent any such personal suggestion about his attire, they still felt that in his own interest someone should risk making the suggestion, even in a circuitous manner. This delicate job was entrusted to the seniormost courtier, who undertook it with great reluctance. With trepidation he appeared in the presence of His Exalted Highness and reminded him of the time at which he was due to leave the palace. The Nizam indicated that he was aware of his evening engagement. He was, as a matter of fact, even then quite ready to leave. This was the occasion for the courtier to cast a passing glance at His Exalted Highness's attire, his eyes lingering a little longer on the creased pyjamas.

The Nizam noticed the critical gaze, and, to the unspoken criticism, in a flash retorted 'What's wrong with my pyjamas? I changed them only yesterday before I left.' The courtier apologetically murmured that such a thought had not even entered his mind. But when His Exalted Highness arrived at the palace steps to enter his car there was a pleasant smile on the face of the group of courtiers who noticed that His Exalted Highness had, of his own accord, put on a fresh pair of crisp white pyjamas for the President's Banquet.

The seat of the New Indian Republic held little attraction for the Rajpramukh of Hyderabad, and he quickly arranged to return to his own State, Hyderabad, where urgent matters awaited him requiring his personal attention. Affairs of State were not his only preoccupation, for equal in his estimation were the duties which fell upon him as head of the large family over which he presided. Everyone's problems in that family are his problems. He attends to every detail himself and is never happy to entrust those duties to anyone else.

He has to supervise the draft of a letter to the government in connection with certain personal investments of his; to dis-

cuss with his Financial Adviser the details of a new trust; to discuss with his lawyers whether the implications of certain terms of some important agreement are in order; to find a suitable husband for grand-daughter No 8; to supervise the studies of grand-son No 32, whose arithmetic is reported to be 'weak; to discuss with the palace doctor why grand-son No 31 frequently complains of a tummy-ache; and so on.

His normal day is a busy one. Up at 5 o'clock in the morning he has his cup of coffee. It is served to him by his daughter Shahzadi Begum, who alone is allowed to attend to his personal needs. He is a heavy coffee drinker, consuming some forty or fifty cups each day.

Regularly during the day he says his prayers and on Fridays he goes to the mosque. His habits are regular. He does not like change. He likes to have the same people around him. If he finds someone interesting he calls this person to talk to him at regular intervals.

He is meticulous about detail. Each morning before seven o'clock he settles down to write out the day's menus for the whole palace.

There are three grades of menus:

Menu No 1 is for the higher members of his family.

Menu No 2 is for the rest of the family, which would include the *khannazads* or personal attendants.

Menu No 3 is for the palace servants. Yet all of these menus he writes in Urdu in his own hand. They read like a *firman*, a royal command.

His groceries, or what in India would be called 'bazaar', cost Rs 500,000¹ a year, which averages Rs 1,500² per day. There

1. £35,000.

2. £100.

are several cooks in the palace, each specializing in a different item of food. For instance, there is one cook whose job is only to make rice, but in a dozen different ways.

The kitchen consists of several houses at the back of King Kothi grouped around an open space. In charge of it is the *mohotami mezhanna*, which is equivalent to Superintendent of the kitchen. Although reputed to be a man of considerable means he would never appear in the presence of his royal master except in modest, almost tattered clothes. It is regarded as disrespectful to flaunt one's prosperity in the presence of the Nizam.

The Nizam himself eats very little. His own food is extremely simple. It may consist of just one item like *kabobs*¹ followed by rice and a little *dal*, which is the Indian name for lentil. The rice dish would be varied, and in place of the *dal* there might occasionally be a curry. Again, on days of festival like *Id* and the New Year, or his own birthday, or that of the heir apparent, there might be a *pilau*, either done with the meat cooked in the rice or with saffron, almonds and currants. Whatever the menu, it is his custom to send each day a small part of it to his two seniormost sons, Prince Azam Jah and Prince Muazzam Jah, even though they have their own elaborate kitchens. It is to indicate that he has thought of them. There is more of sentiment in the idea than food; but it is almost tradition. To find, at the most elaborate parties of the princes, a few spoonsful of *dal* placed in front of them in a silver *fulka*.²

The Nizam himself exerts the most rigid control over diet. This is the secret of the excellent health which he has kept throughout the years. As soon as he feels slightly indisposed he goes on a day's fast in order to rest his system. He also believes that fasting gives him a clear mind for work.

1. Meat balls or meat on skewers.
2. Small handleless cup.

His physician recently certified that his heart was like that of a young man of thirty-five.

Physicians and doctors of medicine came into his life only a few years ago when he fell seriously ill for the first time. It was noticed that he went to bed in the middle of the day, which was most unusual for him. Knowing his thorough dislike for modern medicine, it was difficult for those around him even to suggest that a doctor be called in.

However, the initiative was taken by a senior official who arranged for a pathologist to take a blood test. The pathologist's report revealed that the Nizam was suffering from paratyphoid. Chloromycetin was immediately prescribed, but His Exalted Highness who still adhered to his belief in native *unani* medicine, firmly refused to have his physique defiled with new-fangled pills and potions. A curious situation arose in the palace with the Nizam playing the dual rôle of patient and physician and insisting on supervising his treatment himself. None of the Court officials, however high, dared to interfere without being rebuffed with a remark such as: 'Who asked your opinion?' However, as his health was causing great anxiety, it was suggested to the chief representative of the Government of India in Hyderabad that perhaps the Nizam would not so easily brush aside this high official's advice as he would the advice given by his palace courtiers.

The High Official arrived at the Palace and was received by the Nizam in his sick bed. After a few courteous inquiries on behalf of the Indian Prime Minister and the President, the High Official well primed by the palace officials, came out with the remark: 'Of course, your Exalted Highness must be taking chloromycetin.' This gave the opportunity to one of the officials standing, by previous arrangement, nearby to volunteer, the information that His Exalted Highness had been prescribed

such a drug but that he had not yet tried it. At this he showed great concern and virtually insisted, with the full force of the Government of India behind him, that chloromycetin was a *sine qua non* to recovery from paratyphoid. He became so insistent that the Nizam in his weakened state at last agreed to inspect the bottle which contained these pills. Thereafter, as a great concession to the Government of India, he called in his doctor of native medicine and asked him what his opinion was of this Western mumbo-jumbo called chloromycetin. By now even the native doctor had been drawn into the conspiracy, which was to push this essential drug into the Exalted system. With great tact, he examined the bottle, and then recalled that he had heard about this wonder drug as having a miraculous effect. He assured the Nizam that the drug was as miraculous as it was claimed to be and that a digression from *unani* medicine was permissible in this instance.

Thereupon the Nizam turned to the High Official and told him that he would take the pills, and hoped that all would now be satisfied. But the High Official was taking no chances. He flatly told the Nizam that he would not dream of leaving the palace until he had actually seen His Exalted Highness swallow the pills. By now the pills had been brought with a glass of water and the Nizam with a very wry face took the two pills in his hand. The first he quickly put in his mouth and the second he quietly dropped on to the bed, hoping that it would not be noticed. Everyone was happy, except one particularly observant courtier who noticed this sleight of hand. He tactfully raised his eyebrows and indicated to the High Official that one pill had not gone in. The High Official thereupon pointed this out to His Exalted Highness who sleepishly swallowed the other one, under protest. Eighteen hours later the fever broke.

While he was grateful to the insistent courtiers who had

hatched this plot, almost his first remark on recovering was that his pure system had been sullied with some unknown drug. 'For sixty-seven years', he said, 'I have never touched western medicines, and now you have made me do it.' But the courtiers put up their hands in innocence and they all indicated in turn that the devil had come in the shape of the High Official of the Government of India.

* * * * *

Soon after the superintendent of the kitchen departs with his menus for the day, the two commanders of the police guards call on him. Even after Police Action, the Nizam retains two units of 1,200 guards each, which form part of the household bodyguard. These guards perform duties not only in the palace but at various points on his personal estate.

All this time the Nizam is in his 'office', which is in reality only a chair on the verandah of the part of the palace which he uses, Nazri Baug. The palace is King Kothi; Nazri Baug is one portion of it.

It is on the verandah that he does all his day's work. As he opens his mail himself, he has much to cope with. He does not believe in a table and writes his *firman*s on a pad resting on his knee.

Opposite him stands a guard, called a *jawan*. There are eight of these who do duty on turn. The *jawan* is a bodyguard in the literal sense of the word. He never moves from his position opposite the Nizam.

On the right of HEH two other men stand on duty. One of them runs errands all over the palace, taking messages to the various officials who work in various parts of the palace, or making telephone calls as HEH directs. The other flunkey is a *saga* or water-bearer. All he has to do is to fetch water for his



From left to right: Dr Rajendra Prasad (President of India), the Governor of Madhya Pradesh, the Governor of West Bengal and HEH Nizam of Hyderabad in Murch. The pointed finger is a characteristic pose of the Nizam



The late Nawab Sir Asman Jali



His son, the late Nawab Moin-ud-daula



His grandson, Nawab Zahir Yar Jung Bahadur

Three generations of Faigah noblemen

royal master whether it is for drinking or washing hands. The *saga's* is a full time job, for His Exalted Highness has the habit of washing his hands on the slightest provocation. Each time he touches a piece of paper which has come from outside, even from his own Peshi office, his personal secretariat, he feels it necessary to send for a finger bowl to rinse his fingers. So used are the *sagas*, of whom there are eight doing duty in turn, to his ways that they instinctively know the sort of correspondence which he will want to wash off when he has done with it. He has only to make a small sound for his attendants to know what he wants.

After the two commandants, comes the head of police, formerly known as the *kotwal*. This official presents his daily diary to His Exalted Highness, a highly informative document about the movements, sometimes even the intentions, of almost everyone important in the State. The *kotwal's* job is to see that nothing escapes HEH's notice.

By nine o'clock he calls for his Financial Adviser. This official's field of work goes a little beyond finance. HEH has two Advisers who work closely with each other. Between them they handle his official work. They rank very high in the palace hierarchy. Nothing is hidden from them, for the Nizam believes in trusting implicitly or not at all.

The Nizam has a clear mind and grasps a point quickly. It is customary for his advisers to study all the correspondence and put up a note on the subject in Urdu. The translation into Urdu is a form and not a necessity for the Nizam speaks and writes English fluently. On this note the Nizam passes orders which the Advisers translate into action. He often dictates brief notes on how he wishes a letter to be answered, at the end of which he adds another favourite expression of his, 'Put it into proper shape and form'.

He has a tremendous memory for the minutest detail if he wishes to remember it, but he can be equally vague if he does not choose to remember a man or an incident.

So the morning passes and after saying his prayers around noon, or a little later, depending on the official work in hand, he has his midday meal. After lunch he rests for hardly ten minutes and is soon back at his 'office' on the verandah.

Sometimes he may grant an interview, but this is rare. He has a dislike of meeting people, especially high officials on courtesy calls. He always asks: 'But what does he want to see me for?' Recently a very high judicial personage on his way through Hyderabad indicated his desire to pay a courtesy call on His Exalted Highness, and suggested coming to see him for tea.

'For tea?' asked His Exalted Highness, almost outraged, when this suggestion was communicated to him, 'What for does he want tea?'

The palace official had quite a difficult time explaining that in view of the individual's very high position, it may perhaps be misunderstood if the Nizam were not to accept the courtesy call.

'But he has already paid a courtesy call last year', HEH protested, 'and I gave him a cup of tea then.'

'Yes, Your Exalted Highness', the palace official agreed, but still maintained his point that it would perhaps produce smoother understanding with the Government of India if such courtesy calls were accepted.

'Very well', the Nizam said, but most reluctantly.

'As Your Exalted Highness pleases', came the standard reply, 'then shall I say 4.30 pm will suit Your Exalted Highness?'

'Very well', the Nizam repeated, still reluctantly.

As the palace official was retiring from His Exalted Highness's

presence, the Nizam added, 'But I will not give him tea'. On that point he had made up his mind. No tea!

Around 5 pm he gets ready for his regular evening drive with some of the youngsters of the palace, especially the young children of his favourite Begum, Leila. Children take to him easily and he in turn adores them. At the appointed time he moves out of King Kothi and invariably drives to the Azakhanna built in memory of his mother where he says a few prayers before returning to the palace.

He lives a simple life now, as becoming to his age, for he has lost interest in earthly pleasures. Work and prayer remain his main interests in life.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Meeting the Fabulous Mogul

IT was the day of the full moon, Thursday, 18th February 1954. A little before four o'clock in the afternoon, a smart, pale blue Cadillac drove up to the house of Nawab Khushru Jung, my host.

It was a palace car, and bore no number plate. On its door, painted in gold was a ornate 'O'. It stood for Osman, the Nizam's first name. A tall, pleasantly greying man in his middle fifties, wearing a long coat of wheat-coloured silk and a black cap, stepped out of it. His name was Khan Bahadur Cooverji Taraporevala, Financial Adviser to His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad and Berar. The Nizam called him 'Tarapore' for short.

Mr Tarapore had come to escort me to the palace that afternoon. My request for an interview had been granted by the Nizam.

The palace, King Kothi, was only five minutes by car from the Nawab's house. In the few minutes we had to spare I got myself briefed in the protocol of the Nizam's Court, a subject in which Mr Tarapore was well versed.

Courteously it was indicated to me that the correct manner in which the Nizam was to be addressed was 'Your Exalted Highness'. 'It would be advisable', Mr Tarapore said, 'not to address him as "you"'. Always say "Your Exalted Highness" where normally one would say "you"'.
'All the time?' I asked.

Mr Tarapore indicated with brisk nods of the head that such was the correct form.

MEETING THE FABULOUS MOGUL

I reflected for a moment. In the few minutes at my disposal I rehearsed a few sentences with 'Your Exalted Highness'.

'I am very grateful to Your Exalted Highness for having been pleased to grant me an interview, which I so much desired.'

Mr Tarapore nodded approvingly.

I continued: 'It is very kind of you . . . Sir.'

Mr Tarapore corrected me: 'It is very kind of *Your Exalted Highness* . . .'

I repeated the words after him. The look of disapproval on Mr Tarapore's face changed to a smile.

We rehearsed a few more sentences together. It was now seven minutes to four. We decided it was time to leave.

King Kothi lay off the main road. It was so named because of the initials 'KK' which were found all over the palace when it was purchased from its original owner, Kamal Khan, a wealthy landowner. The initials could not be erased from every nook and corner of the palace. To call it 'King Kothi' was the only way out. A high brick wall ran around the palace grounds. Nothing could be seen from outside.

The guards stiffened to attention as our car slowed down near the palace gate. 'They know you are coming,' Mr Tarapore explained. 'His Highness sees visitors very rarely these days. I think you are very lucky that he has agreed to see you.'

The driver, who knew his way around these parts, swung into the palace gardens. We drove under a portico which was the main entrance to the hall where HEH officially received his guests. There we got down and walked up a few steps which led to a short covered verandah in front of the main drawing-room.

Turbaned flunkies dressed in long coats shuffled around us. They were all on tip-toe, for His Exalted Highness was about

FABULOUS MOGUL

to arrive. Periodically, word would come through: '*Sarkar ah rahei hae.*' It meant, 'My Lord is on his way'.

Mr Tarapore indicated to me that I should wait in the verandah until HEH arrived there to receive me. Meanwhile, Mr Tarapore showed me some of the pictures on the wall.

There was one which was particularly interesting — an informal group of three taken on a shooting trip some seventy years ago. In the centre sat the late Nizam with his mutton-chop whiskers, so like a mid-Victorian, gun in hand. On either side of him was a Paigah Amir. The two noble gentlemen looked like toughs who would make Al Capone's inner circle thaw. 'Of course they are in informal attire here,' Mr Tarapore explained. 'In their golden robes you would have no difficulty in recognizing them as noblemen.'

There was another rustle among the courtiers. Word trickled down that His Exalted Highness was now really on his way. He had left the part of the palace, Nazri Baug, his personal abode. Now he was crossing the garden which separates the two buildings. Now, they whispered, he was in King Kothi, where I was waiting for him. It was like a relay of couriers bringing messages from the front.

Soon I became aware of a presence arriving close to me.

Through the curtains I could see two feet shuffling past and just the edge of white pyjamas. I motioned towards the door, but Mr Tarapore gently held me back.

'Wait till HEH comes to the door to receive you', he emphasized. And so I did.

That was when I first set eyes on him. He was standing in the drawing-room, a few yards from me, looking the other way. His hands were clasped in front of him, his head a trifle bowed. In a hushed whisper Mr Tarapore explained that HEH was saying his prayers. Despite his exalted position, the Nizam

MEETING THE FABULOUS MOGUL

never begins his work without bowing to his God in prayer, never meets anyone without conforming to this ritual. I saw his hand, a trifle shaky with age, move up to his face and with his fingers he appeared to be writing something on his forehead.

I knew what he was doing. As is the Moslem custom, he was facing westwards, towards holy Mecca and uttering the prayer; '*La ilaha, illal-la Muhammadur Rasul ullah*', which means 'There is only one God and Mohammed is his prophet'. And on his forehead he was writing the words: '*Yah Ali*', an invocation to *Hazrat*¹ Ali. *Yah Ali* is a strength-giving invocation, frequently uttered by Moslem lips.

The Nizam bowed once again at the end of this short prayer, straightened his long coat and came out through the door towards me. There was a pleasant smile on his face. 'Glad to see you,' he said, 'glad to see you'. He shook me warmly by the hand.

Then he moved away a few steps to take a better look at me.

What manner of man was I? What did I look like? He took me all in.

At the end of this inspection I thought I could detect an expression of approval on his face. He made me sit down on a carved wooden chair on the verandah, while he sat himself on a bench opposite. Mr Tarapore sat nearby.

Quickly I reproduced one of my rehearsed sentences: 'I am very grateful to Your Exalted Highness . . .' I faltered slightly. The strain was too much — that of remembering where the next 'Your Exalted Highness' was to be fitted in.

'Your first visit here?' he asked.

'No, Sir —er— Your Exalted Highness.'

'You have been here before?' he asked, somewhat surprised.

1. Great soul or Saint.

'This is my second visit to Hyderabad, Y'our Exalted Highness'.

Mr Tarapore, who realized we were talking at cross-purposes explained: 'This is his first visit to King Kothi, Your Exalted Highness, but he has been to Hyderabad before.'

'Really?' HEH said as if he were outraged that my visit on a previous occasion, an occurrence within his dominions, had escaped his notice. He was so convincing in his expression of surprise.¹ There was a pause. Again he regarded me silently.

That was the first opportunity I had of viewing him closely. There he sat before me in a simple biscuit-coloured *sherwani*,¹ well buttoned-up at the collar but no different from that which an ordinary Hyderabad shopkeeper would wear.

His deep red fez could be bought at any of the hat shops near the Char Minar. His pyjamas were of ordinary white longcloth, made in the Indian mills. He wore grey cotton socks which hung loosely around his delicate dark brown legs, and soft India *juti*² of camel skin, which could not have cost more than six shillings. Yet this was one of the richest men in the world.

By earthly standards he looked most ordinary, an elderly man, then sixty-nine years of age, with a serious thoughtful face and a benign expression. His hair, closely cropped, had turned salt and pepper grey. His full moustache had been carefully trimmed. His teeth a little jagged revealed he was a heavy smoker, accustomed to chew betel-nut and *pan*.³

But his eyes! They were not the eyes of an ordinary man. They shone in the broad daylight like a tiger's do at night. Deep, rich, piercing. They belonged to a man possessed of some spiritual force. The look in these eyes was far, far away, as if he had

1. Long coat.

2. Slippers.

3. Betel leaf.

lived long years ago and had now returned to earth. Had the Subedar of the Deccan and Faujdar of the Carnatic returned in the garb of an ascetic? Or was this an unrecognized Caliph? As I watched him sitting before me, I wondered where I had seen those eyes before. Yet I knew I never had.

Early in our conversation I realized how keen was his sense of perception. He was a master in the art of handling men, a shrewd judge of human character. At times he appeared extremely attentive, listening with rapt attention to all that was being said when the conversation interested him. At other moments he appeared casual, though always polite. He gave the impression that he had little time to waste. At every turn in the conversation he came to the point quickly. If he did not understand something he did not hesitate to ask. He registered instinctive reactions of approval, disapproval or amusement.

He spoke short staccato sentences in a high-pitched voice. He had a tight-lipped manner of speaking and he emphasized whatever he thought was of any importance.

'And what have you been doing since you arrived?' he inquired, more out of politeness than curiosity.

'Well, Sir, I only arrived yesterday afternoon and ...' I could hear Mr Tarapore prompting me in a loud whisper to say: 'Your Exalted Highness', 'I only arrived here yesterday, Your Exalted Highness', I repeated, correcting myself, 'In the afternoon I went to the Salar Jung Museum ...'

'I see, I see.' HEH nodded with ostensible interest.

'... and last night Mr Tarapore took me to the Rotary Club Meeting.'

'Really?' HEH said, with a glint in his eye, as if I had been taken to the local zoo which he knew so well.

'Yes, Sir ... Your Exalted Highness.'

'And who was speaking?' HEH asked.

‘One of the Ministers of your Government.’

With a sour look on his face, HEH turned to Mr Tarapore as if to ask to which of the nonentities was I referring. Mr Tarapore indicated which Minister it was.

‘I see, I see’, HEH seemed to recollect, when prodded, that he had such a Minister in this Government of which he was Rajpramukh.¹

Turning to me, he added: ‘And what did he say?’

‘He was telling the audience about a one-track railway he had seen on a recent visit to Berlin.’

‘Really?’ the Nizam said, most surprised. He apparently did not expect such intelligent pursuits from the new generation of Ministers thrust upon him in the new Government of which he was now the constitutional figure-head.

‘Yes, Sir’ I replied, now boldly substituting ‘Sir’ for ‘Your Exalted Highness’.

‘And what did you think of his speech?’ HEH suddenly asked me.

Though clearly warned by Mr Tarapore that under no circumstances was I to be frivolous at the interview, I could not resist remarking, ‘Well, Sir, I think a Congress Minister is ideally suited to speak on a one-track railway. They all seem to have a one-track mind’.

Up to now His Exalted Highness was listening to me with keen interest, leaning forward, chin in hand, his elbow resting on his knee in The Thinker’s pose. When I finished, he smacked his lips, clapped his right hand against his thigh in sheer boyish delight and exclaimed: ‘Quite right! Quite right!’ — a favourite expression of his when he approved of something said.

Mr Tarapore, who until then was in uncomfortable suspense because I had sidestepped his instructions, was somewhat re-
i. Head of the State.

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lieved. There was a moment's pause when HEH muttered something under his breath. I thought he said 'Happenny-tuppenny fellows' – a characteristic expression of his – but it would have been indelicate of me to ascertain for sure.

Conversation then turned to the book on which I was working, and I traced for him the process of thought which led me to choose him and his colourful ancestors as the subject of my new book. I told him of the warm response with which the idea had been met by my publishers and the enthusiastic encouragement I had received from those with whom I had discussed the book in England. 'In Britain', I said, 'there is to-day no halo around Mountbatten and Nehru. I think the British people will read my book on you with an open mind.'

To all this he listened calmly, assuredly, modestly. He seemed quietly pleased that elsewhere in the world people were interested in him. Yet he remained impassively silent, glossing over my feeble attempt at flattery. Occasionally he would raise an eyebrow leaving me in doubt whether he was really impressed or whether the interest he showed was out of politeness.

But when he was sincere he left no doubt about it. For the sake of making conversation he asked me if this was to be my first book.

Mr Tarapore quickly intervened to tell him that I was the author of several books. In fact, he made me appear quite important with all the embellishing touches which he put into his spirited description of my authorship.

'Really!' said the Nizam, genuinely impressed.

The only trouble was that he had been told all this before he granted the interview and had now forgotten it.

Mr Tarapore, therefore, chipped into the conversation for quite a while to let His Exalted Highness have a full and fresh introduction to me.

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• 'His latest book is called *Nehru, the Lotus Eater from Kashmir*', Mr Tarapore wound up by saying.

'Really!' said the Nizam. He was now getting interested in me, I thought.

'Yes, Sir', I ventured to add, 'and I sent you an autographed copy on my last visit to Hyderabad'.

This upset him enormously, for he had forgotten the book, the incident and the author.

'To me?' he said in great distress, turning to Mr Tarapore as if to ask what had happened to it.

Mr Tarapore, accustomed to such queries, calmly replied: 'Your Exalted Highness has got the book with you'.

'I see, I see', he said. Then turning to me he said with great charm and a fund of humility, 'I am very sorry. I am very sorry'.

I thought it exceptionally graceful of him, for there was really no need for him to remember the occasion.

Yet a much lesser incident – an article I wrote six years ago – on the 'Police Action' he remembered vividly.

'I remember that,' he said almost before the reference to it was complete. 'I remember that. I still have it.'

Perhaps the reason was that the 'Police Action' was a more important incident in his life than Mr Nehru.

'And you have *all* the material for your new book?', he asked me with a friendly smile on his face, referring to the book which I was writing on him.

I paused and gauged the moment carefully. Then with a certain confidence I replied: 'I think I have all I need, Your Exalted Highness.'

'Really?' he said in his characteristic way, his eyes peering at me again, his mind appearing to glance in that fleeting moment through the pages of his fabulous life, many of which were obviously closed chapters to me.

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'And what will you call this book?' he asked me. His questions came like rapid fire.

I looked at Mr Tarapore for assistance this time. The title had been tentatively agreed upon between author and publisher. Could I risk it being turned down as inappropriate by the principal character in the book? Taking courage into both hands, I told him it was to be called: *Fabulous Mogul*.

His brows were knit in deep thought. '*Fey-bew-lus Mogul*', he repeated to himself in that tight-lipped manner of his.

It was a long-drawn *Fey-bew-lus* followed by a quick short *Mogul*. '*Fey-bew-lus Mogul*', he repeated. He swivelled it round in his mind.

There was a tense pause while I waited for a reaction. Once again he repeated it, a trifle louder, this time as if he was testing it for sound, then turning to his Financial Adviser, he said in his short staccato style: 'Very good! *Fey-bew-lus Mogul*! Very good!'

I heaved a sigh of relief.

The tension had eased all round. Mr Tarapore, who was one of the few persons in whom I had confided my project, was happy for my sake that the idea on which I had been working was taking more concrete shape. He therefore came into the conversation by volunteering the information that the title was a closely guarded secret.

'No one knows who this Fabulous Mogul is, Your Exalted Highness', Mr Tarapore said.

HEH sat up and took notice of that remark. 'Really?' he exclaimed, quite astonished.

'Yes, Your Exalted Highness', Mr Tarapore continued. 'Some people think it is the Aga Khan.'

This was a mistake, as Mr Tarapore realized an instant later, for quick as a ricocheting bullet the Nizam, with fire in his

eyes, retorted: 'Aga Khan? Fabulous Mogul? How can Aga Khan be Fabulous Mogul?'

Quite absurd, I silently agreed, leaving Mr Tarapore in a discomfiture of one. It was like comparing the Piccadilly branch of Lloyds Bank with the Bank of England.

'Aga Khan can't be Fabulous Mogul', the Nizam of Hyderabad insisted, and even Mr Tarapore hurriedly agreed he could not. But I was not sure which of the two words in the title HEH regarded as inappropriate until he clarified it by adding, 'Aga Khan is Persian'.

His eyes were shining again, as he spoke with lips held tight. It was not difficult to realize there was only one Fabulous Mogul alive to-day. He was sitting there right in front of me that February afternoon on the verandah of King Kothi, a magnetic personality drawing lesser men to him, some through sheer power of his wealth, others through power of his personality. He had both in such large measure that it was difficult to say which was the main attraction and which the subsidiary.

Power he radiated in every move of his, except when I saw him first, bowing to his God. It was an immense hidden power coupled with a vitality of mind such as I have seldom felt in the presence of any of the great persons I have interviewed. Mahatma Gandhi, when I met him, was like a lamb, gentle and with soft eyes; the Nizam was like a tiger. He was way ahead of the other princes of India, among whom he was the only Exalted Highness.

I then ventured to ask him if I could see Falaknuma again. Falaknuma was part of his own estate, the *Sarf-e-khas*. Only a few months ago he had passed a special *firman* that it should not be opened any more for exhibition except in very exceptional circumstances and only with his express permission.

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'You have not seen it?' he asked with surprise. I said I had but that I wanted to see it again.

'Falaknuma faces the north', I said.

'Quite right', he said, approving of my observation.

'I want to stand on its balcony and visualize your ancestors looking with awe towards Delhi when that capital of the Moguls was at its height.'

He listened to me attentively. He liked my dreamy talk, even though he knew it was full of historical inaccuracies. Falaknuma did not exist in the Mogul Empire days.

I went on: 'Then I want to visualize your great ancestor, Asaf Jah, standing there, watching this same great empire fall. Then I want to imagine how you must have felt as you stood there and saw the British Empire fade away.'

He came forward to listen to me. He had a subtle appreciation of fantasy, a quick understanding of a dramatic mood. Carried away by the rhythm of my own words, I added: 'Some day someone else may stand on that balcony again and watch other emperors of the North come and go.'

His eyes shone again. His lips buttoned up. I could feel the hurt of his wounds then as the memory came back to him of the Police Action he had suffered at the hands of the Government of that same Jawaharlal Nehru. He remembered the betrayal at the hands of the British whom he and his ancestors had befriended in the hour of their need — through the anxious days of the Indian Mutiny, through two world wars. The utter disillusionment of it all came to him in a flash, yet he uttered no word of complaint. He listened quietly to the rebel in me speak. Occasionally he nodded his head, not in approval so much as in a reminiscent mood.

It was nearly 4.30 now. Mr Tarapore looked at his watch and leaned over to the Nizam to remind him that it was time

for his next appointment. Mr Tarapore must also have asked whether he should escort me out, because the Nizam in an audible voice replied: 'Why? He can stay for tea.' Then turning to me, with great grace, he asked: 'You can stay and have a cup of tea with me?'

This man fascinated me. He spoke the most prosaic sentences with such a majestic old-world charm. Befitting the occasion I replied: 'It would be a great honour, Your Exalted Highness.'

'Very well,' he said, half to me and half to Mr Tarapore.

This was an opportunity I had least expected. The half hour which had just gone by had been tense, for I was engrossed in exciting conversation with him. Now I could sit back and watch him talk to others. I did not have to wait long to find out who his next guests were, for he said: 'You know this chatter—chutter—?' He looked at Mr Tarapore to help him out.

'Clutterbuck, Your Exalted Highness', Mr Tarapore quickly volunteered.

'Oh, yes, Chutterbuck!' said HEH. His finger moved to his right temple to pin in on his mind, pronounced and spelt in his own way.

A few moments later a huge limousine swung into the portico, with a Union Jack whipping proudly from its radiator cap. We all got up and the Nizam moved forward to receive Sir Alexander Clutterbuck, High Commissioner in India of her Britannic Majesty. Sir Alexander stepped out of the car. He was a tall, portly English gentleman in a light grey tropical suit. He went straight up to the Nizam and as he shook hands he bowed his balding head. He addressed the Nizam as 'Sir' and in turn the Nizam produced his formal greeting, 'Glad to meet you'.

Sir Alexander then presented his wife and daughter who had stepped out of the car behind him. With them HEH shook

hands limply, it being his belief that women are unnecessary at interviews of any political significance.

The Nizam led the way into the drawing room outside which we had been standing. He took his seat on a delicate old-fashioned settee and asked Lady Clutterbuck, who was dressed in a powder-blue print, to sit on his right. Sir Alexander sat on a small round chair to his left, slightly in front of him. I sat next to Sir Alexander and on my left, continuing the circle, were Mr Tatapore, the Secretary to the Rajpramukh, the Military Secretary and, finally, Miss Clutterbuck, a tall, attractive young woman in her early twenties, dressed in a shade of bottle-green. In the centre of the circle was an over-sized marble statue which appeared to be of a Greek discus thrower.

The conversation opened with an exchange of diplomatic niceties. 'Your first visit to Hyderabad?' was the Nizam's opening gambit, followed by a few exclamatory remarks such as 'Oh, your first!', 'Really!', and so on.

To everyone's surprise Sir Alexander revealed that he was born in India, in the province formerly known as the United Provinces but subsequently Sanskritized as Uttar Pradesh.

'Really?' said the Nizam, quick as lightning. 'Then you must speak Urdu.' Sir Alexander bashfully replied that he did not.

When that was over, as a gesture to England's representative, the Nizam brought in the subject of the weather. This gave Lady Clutterbuck, who was much more self-possessed than the High Commissioner, an occasion to remark that it was turning quite warm for the month of February. She went on to enquire how the climate generally shaped in Hyderabad.

His Exalted Highness remarked that it was not as bad now as in the month of May. 'May', he said, 'is unbearable. Unbearable!'

Lady Clutterbuck then narrated how, on their last trip to

Switzerland, there had been a fall of 130 inches of snow. HEH became quite agitated over this snowfall and produced a half-dozen 'Oh's' and a quarter-dozen 'Really's'. He then commented it 'must have been terrible. Terrible!'

Contrary to the accepted form and procedure of the palace, Lady Clutterbuck, with a disarming smile, ventured to differ from him. 'No', she said, 'it wasn't terrible at all. In fact we all enjoyed it.'

'A hundred and thirty inches of snow! And you enjoyed it! I think it must have been terrible. Terrible!' Shrewdly he went on to make his point. 'At least we Indians would find it terrible.'

Despite this quick change of climate from the May heat of Hyderabad to the snows of Switzerland, Sir Alexander and I were surreptitiously wiping our moist foreheads with our handkerchiefs. We both happened accidentally to look up and notice there was an immobile fan. In an instant the Nizam passed one of his silent *firman*s that the fan be turned on.

There was a slight pause in the conversation when the Nizam turned to Sir Alexander and asked if he knew me, mentioning my name — and so much more accurately than that of the High Commissioner. A few introductions followed after which it was generally accepted that everyone knew everyone else.

The Nizam's personality dominated the conversation without being in the least obtrusive. By age and position he was the most senior and he had a natural gift for amiability. Sir Alexander Clutterbuck may have been the representative of Great Britain, but right here in King Kothi there was no other Majesty. This became evident a moment later when, with just a move of his finger, he signed to one of his invisible attendants to serve tea.

Like a swarm of bees, yellow-turbaned bearers came out from behind the curtains, about a dozen of them bearing trays

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with cups and teapots and cakes and biscuits. There was a choice of tea or coffee. The biscuits, which were home-made, were excellent. Of these the Nizam had one, and with it he took a little black coffee in a small coffee-cup which was obviously a special one reserved for him.

Over tea there were a few more exchanges of conversation. He asked the Clutterbucks whether they had come to India by air or sea. There was a reference to a recent air crash. Everyone agreed that it was a tragic mishap. There was some conversation on the future of the Comets, and I had the opportunity of revealing that I had recently visited the de Havilland aircraft factory at Hatfield and had seen some of the new Comet II's in the making. I also mentioned that the Comet III, the prototype of which was a closely guarded secret, would cost a crore of rupees.¹

'A crore of rupees !!!!!' HEH exclaimed in great surprise, but what surprised me much more was that he should even have batted an eyelid over a trifling figure like that.

Soon the empty tea cups were taken away and a finger-bowl was brought especially for the Nizam, for he had touched the biscuits with his fingers. Carefully he washed his fingers in the bowl, after which, with a few jerky daubs he wiped them on a napkin. His hand then went to the side pocket of his *si-rwan*, from which he produced a simple cotton handkerchief, which he used to wipe his moustache.

A large round silver box of cigarettes was brought in. Sir Alexander was offered one and so was I.

The Nizam took one for himself.

Just then it occurred to him that the ladies were receiving no attention. He quickly turned to Lady Clutterbuck and said:

1. A crore is ten million. A crore of rupees is approximately equal to £700,000.

'Your daughter does not smoke!' taking it for granted that she did not. He was basing his judgment on the customs of his harem.

To his surprise Lady Clutterbuck replied: 'Well, she does—sometimes.'

'Oh, really!' said the Nizam, quite taken aback that such a young woman should indulge in such a habit. Simultaneously he directed the bearer to take the cigarettes over to her.

Then as an afterthought to Lady Clutterbuck he added: 'You don't smoke?'

Lady Clutterbuck, still self-possessed, with a very demure look on her face, admitted that she did, again 'sometimes'.

This really shook HEH. These wild Western women were really going too far.

To smooth over the situation, Lady Clutterbuck admitted that it was really quite terrible that women had taken to smoking, to which the Nizam unhesitatingly agreed; 'Terrible! Terrible!' laughing very heartily at his own expression of candour.

He must have noticed that I had remained quiet and rather in the background during these exchanges. In order to draw me back in, he suddenly revealed to Sir Alexander that I was a Parsi and that my religion was Zoroastrian. He obviously had a respect for this rare breed of men who, over twelve hundred years ago, had left Persia at the time of the Arab invasion, taking the sacred fire with them in frail little sailing boats and eventually found their way to the shores of India.

He further revealed that Parsis celebrated their New Year on the twenty-first of March. 'The day is called Jamshed-e-Navroze', he said.

All this knowledge of my people and their religion baffled me as much as it did the Clutterbucks. Lady Clutterbuck kept

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the ball of conversation rolling by remarking, 'In India everyone seems to have a New Year of their own. And so many holidays.'

It was then that I remarked to Lady Clutterbuck that there was, however, one day of the year which all Indians regarded as holy, and that day was the thirty-first of March.

Mr Tarapore, as Financial Adviser to HEH was the quickest to appreciate that I was referring to the last day of the financial year by which everyone had to fill in their income returns. Income tax had now become a sore point with the Nizam, as under the new Government of India the income of the Princes of India were being threatened with taxation. The immunity which they had traditionally enjoyed under the British was in danger of being withdrawn.

My silly remark produced tremendous amusement all round the room. The Nizam was particularly pleased that I, a Parsi, should have justified his confidence in my race by so quickly producing a spark of entertainment.

There were patches of conversation which were just banal, diplomatic and courteous. The Nizam referred to Sir Alexander's appointment, his term of office, the climate of Delhi and Hyderabad. By practise and experience he had developed a special technique for such occasions whereby he kept up a delightful patter of conversation which was of no particular significance and thereby reserved his mental powers for more important occasions.

Right now he was just working off the time which he had allotted to the representative in India of the British Government.

Sharp at five o'clock the Nizam turned to Lady Clutterbuck and thanked her for having come to tea. Before anyone knew what was happening, he was up, shaking hands with her lady-

ship. Sir Alexander, who was in a middle of a sentence with me, scrambled to his feet, as did all of us. A few minutes later, after more handshakes and bowing, the limousine swung out of King Kothi, the palace guards presenting arms to the representative of the British Crown.

Then the pale blue Cadillac drove up for me. 'Glad to have met you', the Nizam said to me, 'glad to have met you', as I bowed and shook hands with him. But he bowed too, which I thought was a most unusual compliment.

He stood there before me for just a few moments more, a Mogul to the tips of his fingers. As I closely watched the venerable expression on his face and those deep, piercing eyes of his, I came closer to the belief which I now hold, that he is on his way to a Caliphate.

Then, as I stepped into the car, he turned round and whisked away. From the car I quickly looked back at him, but all I could see was his camel-skin slippers shuffling away into the dim interior of the palace.

I had met the fabulous Mogul: Lieutenant-General His Exalted Highness Asaf Jah Muzaffar-ul-Mulk Wal Mamalik Nizam-ul-Mulk Nizam-ud-Daula Nawab Mir Sir Osman Ali Khan Bahadur, Fateh Jung, Faithful Ally of the British Government, GCSI, GBE, Nizam VII of Hyderabad.

He was, as one of his sons once said to me, 'a man in a century'.

It's a Tradition

THE next day was Friday, the day on which the Nizam pays his weekly visit to his private mosque in the Baag-e-Aam. The Baag-e-Aam, which means the public garden, is a miniature park in which various public buildings, such as the Jubilee Hall, are situated. At one of its entrances is the mosque which Nizam VII has built and where he offers prayers each Friday. The mosque is open to all Moslems, as is the custom, but usage has restricted it to the Nizam and his close circle.

A little before noon, I hurried to the gardens, got out of my car and stood at a distance from the entrance to the mosque to watch His Exalted Highness arrive. A cluster of courtiers and members of his household, all male of course, were waiting for him. They included the head of the palace police, several Nawabs of ages varying from twenty to eighty, a few of HEH's sons, grandsons, sons-in-law and a large group of *khannazads*. They totalled no more than fifty. They were all dressed in long *sherwanis* of the same shade of beige and they all wore ep-red fezs.

Behind me were a few passers-by, chiefly Hindus, in modern attire who had halted there to see the Nizam arrive that morning. Only one khaki-clad, khaki-turbaned, traffic cop was present to keep the entrance of the mosque clear. Beyond this, no security measures appeared necessary, in sharp contrast to the Ministers of Government who believe in heavy protection when making public appearances.

From where I stood I could see on my right the high road

along which the palace car was expected to come. Almost at the stroke of noon a little dark grey car, with its hood down, appeared on the high curve of the road. It came down the road quite swiftly for a car of that antiquity. The lone policeman on point duty came quickly to attention and his whistle signalled that His Exalted Highness was on the way.

At first I thought this was only the pilot car and that the Nizam of Hyderabad would probably follow in a more luxurious limousine. But as the car cut through the traffic island outside the garden and purred smoothly through the main gate I could see, sitting by himself in the back of this antiquated tin Lizzie, the fabulous Mogul himself. The car in which he had arrived was a model Ford Tourer which would not fetch more than \$10.00 in a Detroit second-hand dealer's sale. Yet this was the man who had in one part of his palace grounds a large sprawling garage in which were kept Rolls Royces of different vintages and a fleet of modern American makes, ranging from Packards and Cadillacs to more modest brands. But for coming to the house of God for prayer on Fridays, he used his little grey Ford. It bore the number plate 'KING KOTHI (Hyd) O'.

As he stepped out of it the assembly of courtiers bowed low in unison and did the salutation of the *adab*. The Nizam stood for a moment at the foot of the steps and acknowledged the greeting by placing his hand on his heart. Then, as he walked up a step or two, one of his courtiers hurried down to whisper something in his ear. He turned around and looked for me and as our eyes met, almost instinctively I bowed and, not knowing what else was appropriate for the occasion, I made a gesture of the hand which was a feeble effort to pay him the respect to which he was accustomed.

He greeted me in return and then spoke to one of his men who came running out towards him.

'IT'S A TRADITION'

'His Exalted Highness says he will be quite some time at prayer and asks that you should not wait for him', was the message I received a few minutes later.

I turned back but slowly, for I wanted to see him even from the distance. Quietly he laid his stick down, took off his shoes and before long he had joined the congregation which had its back to me now. The mezzuin called the faithful to prayer and soon all heads were bowed, including that of the fabulous Mogul. Before God all were equal at the moment.

'Father is always praying nowadays', Prince Muazzam Jah explained to me one day. 'Prayer is the basis of his life to-day.'

'Do you ever have any discussions on religion with him?' I asked.

'Discussions?' he said, 'what do you mean by discussions?'

I explained myself more fully:

'But I cannot speak to father', he said.

'What do you mean — cannot speak to father?'

'Just that', he said. 'I cannot speak to him directly nor does he speak to me directly.'

'Why? Is there anything wrong?'

'Nothing is wrong. It is just the tradition.'

'A tradition that the father does not speak to his son?'

'Exactly so.'

'Doesn't he speak to your eldest brother?'

'Certainly not', the Prince replied emphatically.

'Then how do you communicate what you have to say to him?'

'Always through someone. For instance, if I want to tell him that I would like to do this and that, and want to know whether he would approve of it, I send AP to him with the message.'

AP was his abbreviated way of referring to Ali Pasha, the

Prince's constant companion who is by way of becoming a son-in-law of the Nizam.

I paused and recapitulated what the Prince had just said. It all seemed so strange to me. Then I asked: 'But don't you ever meet face to face as father and son?'

'Of course', the Prince said helpfully. 'He has come to this very house only recently.'

'Well then, when he comes here doesn't he say something to you?'

'Not to me directly. He will sit here for instance and I will be directly opposite him but if he wants to say anything to me he will tell AP to tell me, even though I can hear what he is saying.'

'How does he do that?'

'He will say to AP 'I think Junior Prince should do this and that, or take this and that medicine, or anything that comes to his mind.'

I listened spell-bound. The Prince continued:

'Then AP will repeat it to me, right there, saying "Sirkar says that you should do this and that or take this and that medicine".'

'Then what do you do?' I asked.

'I will reply to AP, who will give my answer to father.'

It was the sort of three-way conversation that travels faster than sound, for before the message had officially reached the Nizam, he had heard it.

I was about to ask the Prince whether this mode of carrying on conversation with an intermediary was adopted by him in his own household when a sudden chorus of tiny tots burst into the room shouting 'Daddy! daddy!'

There were three girls. The eldest was six and the youngest about three. Each sported a uniformed governess at her side.

'IT'S A TRADITION'

They rushed to their father and told him of their requirements, which ranged from chocolates to chewing-gum, without the traditional formality of the third man.

Then the Prince drew attention to my presence, adding:

'But first you must say how-do-you-do to uncle', which the three girls ceremoniously did, asking for further information. Did I have chocolates, for instance, which would solve all their immediate problems?

I asked the Prince what the girls were called.

'This', pointing to the eldest, 'is Windy'.

'What?' I asked, believing I had misheard an old Persian name.

'Windy', he repeated in a clearer stutter. 'The next is Pinkie and the little one is Dinkie.'

He added: 'Of course if you want their full names it is Windy Loo, Pinkie Poo and Dinkie Doo. And Doodles is upstairs.'

'Who is Doodles?' I asked, slightly confused.

'That is my son', said Prince Muazzam Jah.

But Doodles did not come down that morning. So I missed meeting the ninth generation of Asaf Jah.

* * * * *

The West has crept into the City of Hyderabad and the new generation of Asaf Jahs travel about the world; their wives, instead of living in purdah live in Paris; their sons being educated at English public schools. But for Osman Ali Khan, Nizam VII, the tradition of his forefathers continues, even though the age of the Mogul Courts will never return, nor the grace of living and the fabulous splendour which went with them.

Another century will pass but it is doubtful whether there will be such a Fabulous Mogul ever again.

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